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SAINT BERNARDINE OF SIENA

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BY PAUL THUREAU-DANGIN
OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY
TRANSLATED BY
BARONESS G. VON HUGEL

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BEDFORD STREET, W.C.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

4984

PREFACE

THE Italian Renaissance, although not yet at the zenith of its splendour, had nevertheless during the fifteenth century attained perhaps a degree of greater freshness and spontaneity, of a superior and more exquisite charm. The star of antiquity was slowly rising with a lustre hitherto unknown, piercing the clouds of medieval obscurantism, and enthralling the minds of men to the sole doctrine, which purported to have rediscovered the lost secret of æsthetic beauty, and to have paved the way for intellectual emancipation. And yet Humanism can scarcely, strictly speaking, be looked upon as a new movement in Italy, since it arose there rather as a revival of a classic past never wholly obliterated from memory and traces of which still covered the soil.

All the peculiar circumstances of the time tended to absorb the country in the pursuit of one idea. The great schemes which had engrossed Italy during the Middle Ages had ceased to occupy her attention. The long struggle between the Papacy and the Empire, in which not only universal liberty of conscience but also national independence were at stake, had been brought to a close by the defeat of the house of Hohenstaufen, when the limits of the vanquished Empire had been definitely thrown back

upon Germany. And now, by a strange coincidence, it was the turn of the victorious Papacy to cross the Alps and repair to Avignon, thereby dealing a blow at its own prestige, which was destined to suffer still further aggravation by the scandal of the Great Schism. Indeed, the Italy of that day, freed from the yoke of the emperors and practically also from that of the Pope, must have contrasted oddly enough with the former home of Guelf and Ghibelline, of a ceaseless and bloody feud. Even the passion for liberty which used to lend so varied and agitated a life to the innumerable republics of the peninsula seemed to have become extinct, as one by one the people abdicated their rights in favour of some tyrannical despot, and court conspiracy and petty intrigue were soon all that remained of the vigorous public life formerly centring on the Forum.

A more propitious moment, then, than the fifteenth century could scarcely be conceived for the outburst of that new cultus of antiquity which was to fill the void made suddenly apparent in Italian life. No longer engrossed in the formation of a league against the "barbarians," nor absorbed in the fortunes of some democratic revolt, Italy now sought to dispel the monotony of existence by riveting her attention on the choice of an architect able enough to undertake the novel and daring enterprise of raising the cupola of *Santa Maria dei Fiori*. Ghiberti, on his completion of the gates of the Baptistery, wins her unqualified applause, while rapt attention is bestowed on Æneas Sylvius' or Maneas' ponderous Latin eloquence.

And how could Poggio's discovery of a treatise of Quintilian or of a book of Tacitus produce other than a popular sensation, in a day when diplomatists were called upon to contend for governmental rights to particular manuscripts, and when we find the King of Naples stipulating for the grant of a fine Livy MS. as a condition of his peace with Florence!

Princes and republican magistrates vied with one another in paying homage alike to humanists and artists, and this not merely from personal, but from political motives. For to curry favour with the people, and console them for their loss of liberty, it was deemed necessary to embellish the towns, enrich the libraries, and afford the inhabitants the opportunity of profiting by the discourse of some famous wiseacre. This system of universal patronage had been adopted by the popes, as a means of maintaining and heightening their authority, nearly a century before Leo X, when we find them already actively in pursuit of artists willing to labour for their interest; nay, to attract humanists to their court, they occasionally went so far as to confer ecclesiastical dignities on men of very indevout life.

Thus, on all sides we are met by the novel and unwonted spectacle of a nation devoted entirely to literary and artistic dilettantism. Holding that, together with that of beauty, the secret of happiness had been rediscovered, men turned scornfully away from what they now deemed the mournfulness of the Middle Ages, with its sombre thoughts of penance and renunciation, to a quasi-epicurean conception

of life, abandoning themselves unrestrainedly to the joy of living. Dante's "inn of sorrow" had indeed been converted into a fairy palace teeming with every sensual and intellectual delight.

Yet the reader has so far obtained but an inadequate, if a traditional, view of the brilliant *quattrocento*. And, he may ask, is this the only side to the picture? Is there naught to discover but a somewhat pagan dilettantism? We should do well to beware of those who would fain simplify so complex a matter as history, and certainly in the present instance a somewhat closer study of the period would suffice to convince us of the existence of a great and powerful ascetic revival, running counter to that other literary and artistic Renaissance, forming, in truth, a counter-movement of the kind which historians are too apt to ignore. But does not this very knowledge that we are breaking somewhat new ground add to the attraction of our task, making us the more ready to turn from a society composed of refined pleasure-seekers to that mortified band of penitents, and to testify to the extent of their fame and influence?

Curiously enough, this movement originated, not with the high dignitaries of the Church, but with the poor and humble votaries of St. Francis. It sprang up within the Franciscan Order as a revival of that heroic spirit of renunciation and ardent charity, of that simple and sublime poesy which, two centuries previously, had animated the soul of Francis of Assisi, spreading from the heights of

Umbria throughout Italy and the Christian world. Abundant, however, as were the first fruits of this harvest, it was not long before it began to dwindle. Various causes contributed to this decadence, for not only was internal dissension rife amongst the Minorites, due partly to a relaxation of discipline, partly to a spirit of revolt verging upon heresy, but additional disturbances arose of a nature to create havoc amongst all religious orders. Such was a peculiarly virulent form of plague which, after raging from 1348 to 1350, and disorganizing and depopulating innumerable convents, was shortly followed by the Great Schism, bringing an inevitable relaxation of ecclesiastical prestige and authority in its train. And thus we find the same order which, in the thirteenth century, counted St. Antony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, Roger Bacon, and Duns Scotus among its members, signally devoid in the fourteenth century of men conspicuous for either sanctity or learning.

This comparative sterility, however, only serves to render the spiritual revival the more remarkable, that so unexpectedly took its rise in the Franciscan convents of Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and which produced saints such as Bernardine of Siena, John of Capistrano, and James of the Marches, besides Albert of Sarteano, Bernardine of Feltre, and Bernardine of Fossa, venerated as blessed. Nor did these worthy sons of St. Francis confine themselves to the cloister any more than their great spiritual father had done; on the contrary, burning with the

love of souls, we find them wending their way through towns and villages, preaching in the open market-places when the churches were too small to hold the vast congregations which flocked to hear them, breathing words of penance, of mercy, and of peace, and recalling to the minds of their hearers the long-forgotten precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Seldom had popular preaching possessed so much energy, eloquence, and marvellous efficacy, never was it more totally devoid of personal motives, more free from party spirit, more exclusively inspired by zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

It is this other aspect of the *quattrocento* which appeared to us worthy of attention, and, in studying the movement, our glance naturally fell on Bernardine of Siena, as its chief promoter, and as the prototype and recognized chief of the preaching friars. Though his name disappears somewhat from the pages of Italian history, more exclusively filled with the tragic tale of another preacher of the century, the great and unfortunate Savonarola, though a far simpler and more harmonious existence fell to Bernardine's share, yet he was none the less renowned and popular in his day; nay, such was the tribute universally paid to his memory that, by a favour vouchsafed to few only of the greatest saints, the process of his canonization was instituted by the Pope almost immediately after his death. Numerous monuments of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, moreover, attest his fame not only in Siena, where we find his ascetic figure constantly depicted on the walls of churches

and other public buildings, but in Perugia, where he is specially commemorated by Agostino Ducci in those charming coloured bas-reliefs of the year 1461; and in Rome, where one of the chapels of the Araceli contains some lovely frescoes by Pinturicchio, illustrating various episodes in the saint's life. Several other towns also preserve memorials of him, such as the portable pulpit from which he was wont to preach, or the tablet he exposed to public veneration; and many an Italian house still bears, carved over the doorway, the letters composing the name of Jesus, adopted as a badge by Bernardine and his followers.

The following life of St. Bernardine is, as the reader will quickly perceive, by the pen of no great scholar or theologian. It has been the writer's sole endeavour to utilize the original sources at his disposal so as to furnish the reader with a living portrait of the saint, with a graphic picture of his time and environment, and above all to discover the secret of that preaching which was attended by such marvellous results. Doubtless an Italian were, in many respects, better qualified for the task, a fact of which the present author is by no means unaware, and which makes him all the more ready to refer the reader to a precedent.

Not many years after Bernardine's death and canonization, Louis XI, King of France, presented the town of Aquila, where the saint's remains were preserved, with a costly shrine in silver gilt; and the Pope at once ordered the relics to be placed therein. Far be it from us to compare

this modest contribution with a sovereign's noble gift, yet were it too much to hope that he, the saintly Italian friar, who suffered his remains so long to repose in a French shrine, would likewise not disdain a humble attempt to revive his memory in a work similarly of French origin?

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ST. BERNARDINE OF SIENA

CHAPTER I

FORMATION OF SAINT & PREACHER

(1380–1417)

I. Siena during the Middle Ages—Anarchy and sanctity—Blessed Tolomei, Colombini, and Petroni, St. Catherine of Siena.

II. Bernardine's infancy and early youth—His character—The Madonna of the Porta Camollia—The plague of the year 1400—Bernardine at the hospital of *la Scala*—He takes the habit of the Minorites.

III. Bernardine's noviciate at the convent of Colombaio—His profession and ordination—His sermon on the Passion—He is ordered by the Minister-General to devote his life to preaching.

IV. The new method of preaching introduced by the two mendicant orders—Its deterioration during the fourteenth century—St. Vincent Ferrer exhorts Bernardine to perseverance in his mission, and foretells its success.

V. Bernardine's first sermons—Foundation of the convent of Capriola—Period of recollection—Bernardine receives the divine summons to missionize Lombardy.

I

SIENA, situated on a triple incline, with her palaces and churches, crenulated towers and steep winding streets, bears the impress of medieval times rather than that of the Renaissance. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, we find her at the summit of her greatness and prosperity, emulating and even surpassing Florence in every warlike, commercial, and artistic enterprise; whence all the more characteristic monuments, including the *Duomo*

and the *Palazzo pubblico*, date from this period. In the latter half of the fourteenth century, however, Siena's fortunes were already so greatly impaired that, far from enlarging her territory, she found some difficulty in maintaining her independence; and, though art still flourished within her walls, the former wave of inspiration had passed away. The city was a prey to anarchy. Conspiracy constantly overthrew the government, bringing factions into power too weak to maintain themselves, while the more enlightened citizens fell a victim to jealousy and persecution, or were discarded in favour of the vilest demagogues. All real influence lay in the hands of clubs and secret societies; exile and confiscation befell entire classes, at one time the nobles, at another the artisans. The *Palazzo pubblico*, formerly the seat of government, became the scene of tumult and bloody massacres on the memorable day when from its large Gothic windows a victorious rabble flung the mutilated remains of the magistrates into the square beneath, and street-warfare was the regular order of the day. What a tale they have to tell, those red palaces with their low porches and scanty barred windows, a tale of positive barbarism extending over a period of nearly fifty years and comparable only in ferocity to the Reign of Terror of 1793 or the Commune of 1871!

And yet, by one of those singular contrasts peculiar to medieval Italy, this city, the home of every evil passion, was nevertheless so rife in saints that it came to be styled by contemporaries "the ante-room of Paradise."

Blessed Bernard Tolomei, founder of the austere congregation of Olivetans, had in fact only just expired in the year 1348, when Blessed John Colombini, hitherto a rich merchant and head of the Republic, embraced a life of penance, poverty and humiliation with that heroic folly so contemned by the world. His example was followed by many Sienese of noble family who grouped themselves around him, calling themselves the "Poor of Jesus Christ,"[1] and who together wended their way through towns and villages, preaching, praying and singing the divine praises, overflowing with poetry and the love of God, rejoicing in persecution, content to suffer and to die, renewing the days of the *Poverello* of Assisi and of his first companions.[2] Meanwhile another Sienese, Blessed Peter Petroni, was leading a solitary life of prayer and penance, and earning withal so wide a reputation for sanctity that, abandoning the strife and turmoil of civil war, his fellow-citizens flocked in numbers to gather prophetic counsel from the lips of this recluse.[3] Lastly, from out the sombre picture of the times, there stands forth one figure luminous above the rest, that of St. Catherine of Siena,[4] the artisan's daughter and humble Dominican tertiary who, despite constant suffering, led a life of contemplation surpassing all

[1] Later on, they formed a new order, that of the Jesuates.

[2] Colombini died in 1367. The story of his life, hitherto but little known, has been recently revived by the graceful and pathetic narrative of the Comtesse de Rambuteau : *Le bienheureux Colombini, Historie d'un Toscan au XIV siècle* (Lecoffre, 1893).

[3] Petroni died in 1361.

[4] Born 1347, died 1380.

belief, displaying likewise great worldly wisdom and sagacity. In an age of violence and discord, it was given to this dauntless woman to proclaim in penetrating accents to the medieval Church the gospel of peace, fraternity and justice, and to become, in virtue of her eminent sanctity and despite her extreme youth, the recognized adviser of popes and civil governments, the arbitrator of Christendom, one of the purest and noblest types of a dispensation providentially suscitated from time to time in moments of exceptional crisis in the Church without the pale of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

II

As though not to break through this long succession of saints, the very year in which St. Catherine died witnessed the birth of our saint at Massa, in Sienese territory, A.D. 1380.[1] His father, who belonged to the illustrious

[1] The prominent facts in St. Bernardine's life, mentioned in the following pages, have been borrowed from the numerous biographies composed shortly after his death by probable eye-witnesses of the deeds they recount. Of these records several have appeared in extract or *in extenso*, either in the fifth volume for May of the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, or in the form of a preface to Père de la Haye's five-volume edition of the *Opera sancti Bernardini Senensis*, published in the sixteenth century; others again were utilized in the seventeenth century for the *Annales Minorum*, by Wadding, who refers to no less than nine of these MSS. as being in his possession. But among this mass of biographical matter we would draw the reader's attention to the following, that composed only ten months after the saint's death by his friend Bernabæus Senensis, a man of some literary distinction, and who filled various offices under the Sienese republic; that by the pen of the celebrated Humanist, Maphæus Vegius, author of a thirteenth book of the *Æneid*, and who, after filling the posts of abbreviator

family of the Albizeschi, was then governor of that town. The child, however, was soon left an orphan, his mother dying when he was only three years old, and his father following her three years later to the grave. Thus the small boy came to be confided to the care of his aunts, Diana, Pia, and Bartolomea, and to that of his cousin Tobia, all women of singular piety and devotedness, to whom he owed much of his moral training. How engaging and faultless is the picture left to us of his early years! So pure and innocent of heart that he would blush at the bare mention of an unseemly word as though he had received a blow,[1] he was by no means timid and shy or otherwise defenceless against evil, but showed himself, on the contrary, full of spirit and resolution. One day, when he was playing in the open with several schoolfellows, it chanced (as it often did in those days) that a man of good breeding ventured to accost him with a shameless proposal. Straightway little Bernardine dealt the speaker such a blow on the chin (his size would not permit him to

and secretary of the *Dateria* (office for the conferring of ecclesiastical benefices) under Eugenius IV, ended his days in 1458 as an Augustinian friar; the work attributed whether rightly or wrongly to St. John of Capistrano, Bernardine's friend and disciple; the anonymous life composed immediately "after the translation of the relics" by a Minorite of the convent of Aquila; lastly, the one transcribed by Surius and given among the miscellaneous collection published by him in the sixteenth century as an introduction to the saint's works. Noteworthy also is the account found in the *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV*, by Vespasiano da Bisticci, and prefixed to the *Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino*, published by L. Banchi (Siena, 1880).

[1] *Illi rubor in facie verecundiæ apparabat, ac si injuria quis ei alapam intulisset.* Life attributed to St. John of Capistrano.)

reach up higher) that the sound was carried right across the square, and the individual retired, covered with confusion, before all the bystanders.[1] "Several years later," writes one of his biographers, "I beheld the same person, on the same spot, listening with evident compunction to one of Bernardine's sermons and shedding tears as plentifully as though he were being severely beaten with rods." On another occasion, after consulting with his comrades on the best means of ridding himself of the importunate advances of a like obnoxious stranger, Bernardine devised the plan of enticing the man beyond the city walls, where the boys suddenly greeted him with a volley of stones and a shower of abuse; nor, according to the words of the old chronicle, did they show a whit less zest over their task than did the Jews who stoned St. Stephen.[2]

When he was eleven years old the boy was summoned by his uncles to Siena, there to receive an education appropriate to his rank in life. At first philosophy and literature (wherein, according to the later testimony of his masters, he obtained great proficiency) engrossed his attention, but later on he devoted himself, heart and soul, to the study of canon law, theology and Holy Scripture, and so entirely did these branches correspond to the natural bent of his mind that all other forms of learning appeared to him stale

[1] *Statim magno ictu pugni civem illum percussit infra mentum, credens percutere faciem, adeo magno sonitu, quod ferè totam plateam replevit auditu.* (Life attributed to St. John of Capistrano.)

[2] *Non minus avide malignum hominem lapidabant quam judæi Stephanum.* (Life attributed to St. John of Capistrano.)

and unprofitable. To such of his companions, indeed, as knew something of that hidden life of penance, piety and prayer, it soon grew abundantly plain that worldly ambition could never still the hunger of this ardent soul, and yet never did this diversity and austerity of life stand as a barrier between him and his comrades, with whom he was, on the contrary, so popular that they were wont to say that "nobody could possibly be bored in Bernardine's company" —such was the magnetic power of his charm! For in place of the emaciated, wrinkled countenance so often depicted by old masters, we must picture him to ourselves at this time of his life as a youth of comely, medium stature, with a ruddy complexion, gay and sprightly in bearing, and affable, if dignified, in manner.

No wonder, then, that his aunts, seeing him so full of personal attraction, took care to warn him betimes of the snares set for the unwary by the wiles of feminine coquetry. But one day, when his cousin Tobia was speaking to him in this sense, the youth to her astonishment gaily replied: "Know you not that I am already in love with one so noble that gladly would I sacrifice my very life to secure her presence, nor could I rest at night were I to let a single day pass without seeing her?" And, harping on the same theme, he used to say that "he was about to visit his love, his own sweet love," until Tobia, though loth to suspect one so devout and austere, grew sore perplexed. On her inquiring one day "the name of the sweetheart of whom he spoke so often and the place where she dwelt,"

Bernardine vouchsafed only the reply that she dwelt outside the *Porta Camollia*. Then poor Tobia, more and more perturbed, resolved secretly to espy every movement of her young kinsman. For this purpose she established herself on the following day close to the place he had mentioned. Nor had she long to wait before Bernardine's figure was seen approaching the spot. Now over the *Porta Camollia* was a fresco representing Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven surrounded by angels dancing and singing and playing upon instruments.[1] From other artistic creations of the period we may easily form an idea of the piety and devotion which must have lain in this now obliterated painting portraying, doubtless, a beauty of conception which no amount of clumsiness in the execution could suffice to mar. And Tobia saw Bernardine kneel down before the fresco, his countenance all aglow with the fervour and ecstatic joy that filled his soul; whereupon having finished his prayer, he arose and went home. But after Tobia had thus watched him for several days, her former misgivings completely vanished, and this time it was with a feeling of complete confidence that she implored Bernardine to tell her the name of the woman he loved, so that, provided she were not of too exalted a rank, an offer of marriage might be made to her in his name. Then, "Since you wish it, mother," replied the youth, "I will tell you my secret which I had intended to divulge to no one. My beloved

[1] This fresco, executed in the year 1310 by the artists Cecco and Nuccio, was restored in 1415 by Benedetto di Bindo. No trace of it remains.

is no other than the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. She it is whom I worship with my whole soul, who is ever present to my mind, and for whom I long as for my peerless bride. But seeing my inability here below to feast my eyes unceasingly on her pure countenance, I have resolved daily to visit her image. And this is my whole love-story." Scarcely had he ended than Tobia, with tears of gratitude to God, pressed Bernardine to her heart, calling him her own beloved child. Constant to his boyish devotion, we find our saint in later life ever and anon revisiting the Madonna of the *Porta Camollia*, and on one occasion, when trying to render the glories of the Assumption vivid to the minds of the Sienese, he dwells from the pulpit on the lovely fresco they were wont to contemplate over the city gate.[1]

There was then in Siena a very old and famous hospital adjoining the cathedral, as was customary in those days, and dedicated to *Santa Maria della Scala*. This building is still to be seen opposite the *Duomo*, and through its open doorway the eye wanders down a vast Gothic hall, until it rests on a chain of undulating hills, standing out well defined against the clear southern horizon, while a modern French touch is lent to this relic of medieval Italy as a sister of charity in her white cornette now and then flits across

[1] "Tutti gli angioli le stanno da torno, giubilando, cantando, danzando, faciendole cerchio, come tu vedi dipènto colà su alla porta Camollia." (*Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino da Siena, dette nella Piazza del Campo l'anno* MCCCCXXVII, *ora primamente edite da Luciano Banchi*, Siena, 1880, Vol. I, p. 25. We shall have occasion elsewhere to refer to this remarkable document.

the scene. In the days of which we write, in the midst of the strife and turmoil of the fourteenth century, la Scala proved itself a very haven of peace and charity, a refuge for all generous souls. There it was that Bernard Tolomei met his death while tending those stricken by the plague; there blessed Colombini, after his conversion, began to sow the seeds of his future sanctity; there also blessed Petroni gave boundless proof of the measure of his compassion and self-denial. And to this same hospital was attached the confraternity of the *Disciplinati Confraternitatis B. Mariæ*, comprising men of every rank bent upon leading a penitent and devout life. At the age of seventeen, our saint joined their number, for the purpose of affording himself greater opportunity for the exercise of works of penance, and he had for several years already been an edifying member when, in the year 1400, that dread visitor, the plague, made its reappearance in Siena.

This disastrous occurrence was far from unprecedented in the annals of the town. Ever since the fourteenth century, indeed, when the plague had devastated and literally depopulated Europe, no spot was proof against its ravages.

And, in the year 1400, Siena was visited for the third time, only on this occasion the disease spread with even greater rapidity than heretofore, owing to the great temporary rise in the population, in consequence of the influx of pilgrims on their way to Rome to celebrate the Jubilee year. Every day added to the long list of plague-stricken,

until finally the very infirmarians sickened of the fatal disease. Then it was that the noble governor of the hospital, John Landaroni, finding himself bereft of all human assistance, betook himself to prayer, beseeching Our Lady to look graciously upon an institution placed under her patronage, to hearken to his cry of distress, and to take the poor abandoned sufferers into her motherly keeping. And lo! as if in answer to his prayer, there came to him Bernardine and some of his comrades begging to be entrusted with the entire charge of the hospital. Touched by so generous a demand, the governor yet hesitated to take them at their word, wondering how far he were justified in exposing mere striplings at the most susceptible age to so imminent a peril. But when he heard Bernardine declare that "supposing even he were to die he would welcome such a death with joy," Landaroni recognized the finger of God in so firm and noble a resolve, and no longer hesitated to confide the sick to his care; nay, notwithstanding his extreme youth, he appointed him temporary governor of the establishment.[1]

Then Bernardine, grouping some ten of his companions around him, addressed them in glowing terms, quoting the divine saying: "Whatsoever ye do unto these the least of My brethren, ye do it unto Me." Far from dissembling the danger they were about to run, he infused courage into his comrades by reminding them how enviable would be their lot were they in time of peace to win a martyr's

[1] "*Claves totius ferè domus eidem consignavit.*" (Boll., 1st. Life.)

crown. "Lo," he added, "the flames are already kindled and the world is well-nigh consumed thereby. Behold, the axe is laid to the tree, the scythe beckons to the harvest: who among us would seek to prolong his own life, while multitudes are daily perishing around him, when so many of those we love have been carried off by the plague? Should we be called upon to die in the midst of our labours, surely our divine Master will welcome us home, and if, on the contrary, our lives be spared, then shall we have good cause to rejoice at having devoted ourselves, body and soul, to His service in the person of His poor. Therefore, whether it be our fate to live or to die, shall we not in either case be the gainers thereby?"

This generous appeal was responded to, and after receiving the sacraments, the young men in a body made their way to the hospital. There Bernardine at once assumed the direction of affairs and laboured day and night, nursing and consoling the sick, preparing them for death, and even burying them with his own hands. He reserved to himself the most repugnant and perilous offices. He restored order and cleanliness, causing the atmosphere to be purified by means of huge furnaces. And, however crowded the hospital might be, none ever applied in vain for admittance. But all this time death was active, carrying off the sick by the hundred and thinning the ranks of Bernardine's devoted little band, several of whom had to pay for their heroism with their lives. Luckily,

however, there was no dearth of persons willing to replace them.

Thus, to the admiration of the entire town, during four whole months did our young saint remain at his post, abandoning it only when the plague had entirely disappeared. But he had scarcely left the hospital when the inevitable reaction from so much fatigue and exhaustion set in, and he fell so dangerously ill that for an instant his life was despaired of. The recuperative power of youth speedily reasserted itself, however, and he recovered, only to ask himself the question what he should do with his renewed strength, to what purpose he should devote the life that had been spared to him. This question was one which had already formerly agitated his mind, and which now seemed to him more than ever incapable of a satisfactory solution, since, on the one hand, he felt himself drawn towards the religious life, and on the other, his first duty was clearly towards his aunt Bartolomea, the devoted guide and friend of his childhood, who had now gone blind. As it happened, however, this obligation was not long to stand in the way of the fulfilment of his desire, and his last tie to earth was loosened when a year later Bartolomea passed away peacefully in his arms. Hereupon, to afford himself leisure for self-examination and in preparation for a life of penance, Bernardine temporarily repaired to a grove beyond the city walls, where he built himself a tiny oratory, and passed his days in meditation and in the practice of severe austerities, sleeping on

the bare ground and living on roots and herbs.[1] By this means he gained a clear insight into his vocation, while the call to a life of poverty and sacrifice seemed voiced by the crucifix itself. So now, all that remained for him was to discover which of the religious orders

[1] Bernardine himself afterwards acknowledged the excessive character of these austerities. This admission, clothed in his habitual playful language, occurs in the course of a sermon delivered in Siena in the September of 1427, in which he insists, for the benefit of certain presumptuous and extravagant penitents, on the value of prudence, humility and common sense. "I will tell you," he says, "the very first miracle I performed. Before I became a friar I one day resolved to live not like a man but like an angel, and to take up my abode in a wood. When I asked myself what on earth I should find to do there, and on what I should subsist, I said to myself, 'I will do as the Fathers of the desert, eating grass when I am hungry and drinking water to quench my thirst.' I also resolved to purchase a Bible to read, and some coarse material wherewith to clothe myself. And I bought the Bible and a thick camel skin to be proof against rain, and then began to look about me for a suitable hermitage. I went beyond the Porta Follonica, gathering thistles and other wild herbs by the way to make into a salad, though I had neither bread, salt, nor oil with me, but, said I to myself, 'I will begin by washing and scraping the leaves, later on I will sort the leaves without scraping them, and, when I have grown used to this method also, I will make a salad without any preparation whatsoever, until finally I will not even pluck the herbs.' So saying, and invoking the Holy Name of Jesus, I took a mouthful of bitter herbs and began to chew them. I chewed and chewed, with no result, until at last, finding myself quite unable to swallow, it occurred to me, 'Supposing I begin by taking a drop of water.' To my cost, however, I soon discovered that the water only went down, while the herbs remained, and this attempt I renewed several times unsuccessfully. Now what, think you, is the moral of my tale? That, by means of a single mouthful of herbs, I so successfully overcame temptation, (for a temptation it certainly was,) that whatever occurred to me to do henceforth that I was prompted to perform by divine grace and no longer by subtle self-love. Alas! how much discretion is needed in following the example of others, and in adopting resolutions which, admirable though they appear on the surface, are at bottom veritable pitfalls." *Le Prediche Volgari, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. II, p. 351, etc.

most perfectly realized his ideal of perfect poverty. After hesitating a moment in his choice between the Dominicans and Franciscans, the study of the rule of St. Francis and a dream which he held to be inspired, determined him in favour of the Minorites.

The convent of *San Francesco* at which Bernardine sought admittance, stood on a hilly promontory at one of the extremities of Siena. And, both the cloisters and the church, which has recently been restored, subsist down to the present day. John Ristori, the then guardian of the convent,[1] a man of great spiritual insight, was not slow in recognizing and approving a vocation, so visibly inspired from on high. As for Bernardine, despite the protestations of several members of his family who had hoped to see him one day a brilliant man of the world, he joyfully divided his fortune between the Church and the poor, and, stripped of all his possessions, hastened, on the 8th of September, 1402, to receive the humble habit of a Minorite at the hands of John Ristori. The 8th of September proved indeed a memorable date in his life, as being not only his birthday and the day of his baptism, but also, in after years, that of his profession, of his first mass, and first sermon. Wherefore in recalling to the minds of the faithful the mystery commemorated on that day, we find him dwelling on these several coincidences, seeing in them a proof of his special consecration to the Blessed Virgin.[2]

[1] Name given to the superiors of Minorite convents.

[2] On such occasions Bernardine, according to his contemporary biographers, would express himself as follows: "*In die Nativitatis Beatæ Virginis natus,*

III

Bernardine's stay at the convent in Siena lasted only two months, his family connexions and the renown of his sanctity attracting too great a concourse of persons to his cell. Wherefore, with the permission of his superiors, he withdrew to the convent of Colombaio, situated at some distance from the town in a wild and woody solitude. Though small and destitute in the extreme, this monastery was hallowed by memories of St. Francis and of St. Bonaventure, and was, moreover, at that time, one of the very few convents in which the rule of St. Francis was strictly applied, a fact which was of itself enough to determine Bernardine's choice. Colombaio indeed belonged to that movement which had already then begun to assume the name of the Observance.[1]

Contemporary biographers tell us of Bernardine's exuberant joy on entering this abode of penance, and of the ardour with which he embraced a life of poverty, humiliation and self-denial. His soul seemed positively to exult in everything naturally repulsive, so much so that, when insulted

eadem die, revolutis tamen temporibus, renatus, religionem ingressus sum Seraphici Patris Francisci; eâdem die professus in Ordine, eâdem die primam missam cantavi, et eâdem die primum ad populum sermonem feci de Beatâ Virgine, cujus amore et gratiâ opto et tali die ex hac vitâ migrare." This last wish remained unfulfilled, since his death occurred on the 20th of May. The above words were repeated by our saint at Siena, in the year 1427. (In *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino da Siena, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. II, p. 240.)

[1] In describing Bernardine's later efforts at propagating the Observance, we shall have occasion to discuss the origin of this reform. (See Chapter v.)

publicly on the road, or when children pelted his bare feet with stones, his only reply to his indignant companions was: "Let them be; they do but help us to gain eternal glory." And yet, meek as he was, the least design on his integrity sufficed to kindle in him that fire of indignation which had already, as a mere child, prompted the blow dealt at his would-be corrupter on the market-place. We are told that there was at that time a woman in Siena who, together with her husband, was regarded as especially devoted to the Minorite order, but who, in consequence of some diabolical suggestion, had secretly suffered herself to be beguiled by a guilty love for Bernardine. So, one day when the young novice was going begging, according to his wont, from door to door, this person, seizing her opportunity, invited him to come upstairs, under pretext of giving him bread for the convent. And Bernardine in all innocence of heart unhesitatingly accepted the invitation. But hardly had he entered the room than, closing the door, she presented herself to him, declaring her intention of crying out for aid, and accusing him of assault, should he venture to repulse her. Then the young friar, suddenly realizing the full peril of his situation, began secretly and earnestly to call God to his aid. Whereupon it occurred to him to tell the woman that in order to accomplish her design, she must first undress herself, which she had hardly begun to do, than, silently seizing the discipline he habitually carried about with him, he scourged her so severely, that, says the old historian, he completely dispelled her evil desire.

Nay the very thought of this chastisement sufficed the woman ever after to dispel all evil thoughts, and both she and her husband remained conspicuous for their devotion to our saint and to his order.

On the 8th of September, 1403, after a year's most fervent noviciate, Bernardine was admitted to his profession, and thereupon, in obedience to his superiors, began to study for the priesthood. But as his theological studies were already far advanced, this only entailed one year's preparation, and on the 8th of September, 1404, he was already able to celebrate his first mass, and to preach his first sermon on Our Lady's nativity.

As a priest, his fervour and austerity were redoubled, so that each day served to heighten the admiration with which his companions regarded him. As a worthy disciple of the stigmatized Saint of Averno, Bernardine's favourite subject of meditation was the Passion of Christ, which inspired him with such intense compassion, that it seemed as though he would die of grief.[1] In consequence he was seized by so great a desire to give outward expression to the thoughts of love and penance suggested by this contemplation that one day, this impulse over-mastering all other considerations, our saint, followed by several friars, whom he had fired with his own zeal, left the convent, carrying a large, heavy cross on his bare shoulders, and thus loaded, made his way towards the neighbouring village of Sarziano.

[1] "Christi passionem tam acerbe deplorabat ut prae dolore moriturus videretur."

At first, this singular spectacle provoked only mockery among the crowd, but when the young friar began to address them in words that came straight from his heart, without the slightest regard for oratorical form and sequence, silence, bewilderment and consternation fell gradually upon the multitude, whose jeers turned to tears, and they ended by venerating as a saint him whom, a minute before, they had scoffed at as a fool. How this simple episode reminds one of many a trait in the life of St. Francis! But although, in a moment of exaltation, Bernardine had thus left his convent bent on a missionary errand, it was as yet by no means his intention to devote himself to preaching. Too obedient not to await the orders of his superiors, he was too humble to solicit their approval. But so great a light could not long remain in darkness, and no sooner was Antony Angelo Pieretto, a man favourably disposed towards the Observants, chosen general of the Minorites in the year 1405, than, hearing of the rare genius of the young friar at the convent of Colombaio, he straightway ordered him to devote his life to preaching.

IV

In the early centuries of the Church, preaching had been exclusively regarded as a pastoral office and confined as such either to the bishop and parish priest, who taught their flock in the parish church and in the cathedral, or to the abbot who would discourse to his monks mid cloistral

seclusion. For the art of preaching, after attaining a high degree of perfection in the hands of the Greek and Latin Fathers, had dwindled down to insignificance at the advent of the ignorant horde of barbarians who heralded the downfall of the Roman Empire. It attained, however, to a vigorous revival in the twelfth century in the days of the religious, literary and artistic Renaissance, when it not only regained its former splendour, but acquired new force and vitality through the popular preachers of the Crusades, above all, by means of St. Bernard, since the latter addressed himself not only to the frairs of Clairvaux but to all states and conditions of men, on the highways of France, Germany, and Italy, in order to proclaim to them the great duty of war against the infidel and that of peace in Christendom.

The novel mode of sermonizing thus inaugurated gained a firm footing at the foundation of the two mendicant orders at the beginning of the thirteenth century, since far from aiming at cloistral seclusion, the sons of St. Francis and of St. Dominic regarded it as their special mission to go abroad and carry the word of God into distant parts. "It is the will of God," exclaims the *Poverello* of Assisi, "that we travel far and wide," and he himself gave his followers the example of a roaming missionary life. But, since it was the Dominicans who generally affected the more learned style of oratory, the Franciscans were naturally the more widely popular, making themselves, to the scandal of numbers of the secular clergy, at home with the people, speaking in colloquial style, treating every

subject with the like daring boldness, ever ready to espouse the cause of the weak and the oppressed, and fearlessly censuring those in high places not only in the State, but even in the Church. Their sermons were held on the public square, or wherever suited their convenience.[1] Extempore pulpits were erected for the purpose in the open air, and we read of certain preachers managing to attract a crowd of forty and even sixty thousand persons. Foremost amongst the number were St. Antony of Padua and Friar Berthold of Ratisbonne, who, we are told, was wont to tie a scarf over his head, which fluttered in the air, showing the people which way the wind blew and consequently whereabout they had to place themselves in order to hear from a distance.

The secular clergy, riled at the thought of paramount influence being gained by these new-comers, who, in their opinion, had "entirely usurped the pastoral office," were by force of circumstances induced to follow their example, as were also the rest of the religious orders; and thus it came to pass that sermons began to increase in frequency, to a hitherto unheard-of degree. In order, however, rightly to estimate the prominence accorded to popular preaching in the social as well as religious life of the period, we must not forget that books were in those days rare and newspapers non-existent, so that public oratory (which through-

[1] Owing to consequent abuses, however, sermons held in the open air were forbidden in France in the fifteenth century by several local councils. But in Italy the practice continued up to a later date.

out the whole of the Middle Ages was confined exclusively to preaching) proved the sole means of mental sustenance besides being the chief promoter of public opinion. Nay, to gain some conception of its astounding efficacy, we need to refer the reader to the history of the Crusades. In the days of which we write, moreover, the news of the advent of a celebrated preacher was enough to fill the country-side, and the long daily sermons to people still under the dominion of faith and hampered by no extraneous teaching of any kind, must needs have produced results undreamed of nowadays in our more complex social organism. And how irresistible did it not necessarily prove in cases where eloquence was enhanced by the renown of sanctity and the lustre of miracles!

Popular preaching may truly be said to have attained its zenith during the thirteenth century. The fourteenth already witnessed its decline, as the old enthusiasm gave way to an apparent lassitude, inspiration to routine. Manuals came into use in which a sermon for every possible occasion might be found ready to hand, such as the collection *Dormi securè*, which by its very title was meant to soothe the conscience of the lazy preacher, with the assurance that he might "sleep in peace for his sermon was quite ready." Seen on the decline, moreover, the defects peculiar to the new style of sermonizing became every day more apparent as familiarity began to degenerate into triviality and buffoonery, and liberty exchanged its glorious name for licence. More especially was this the case in

France, then a prey to factions, in which more than one *prescheur* played the part of rebel and demagogue. Nor was the crisis, in which the Church was then engaged, and which finally culminated in the Great Schism, exactly calculated to restore dignity and sobriety to sacred oratory. And yet, in accordance with that divine element inherent in Christianity, and enabling it to defeat alike the calculations of friend and foe, there suddenly arose one destined to surpass all former preachers in fame and popularity, St. Vincent Ferrer, a Spanish Dominican who, in the year 1397, at nearly fifty years of age, began to missionize the whole territory subject to Avignon. His eloquence, his sanctity, and the wonderful miracles wrought by him, so to speak at every turn, soon won him such popularity and renown that every town he visited wished to keep him for good; but nowhere would he tarry, this "pilgrim of the word of God," as one of his contemporaries so aptly styled him; he must be ever on the move. He wandered through Spain, Provence, Liguria, Piedmont, Savoy, Switzerland, Flanders, and notably France, which he more than once traversed in its full length and breadth, until, in the year 1419, he died of sheer exhaustion in Brittany. It is a remarkable fact that, despite the assurances of his biographers that he knew no other tongue than Spanish, he was everywhere understood. So ascetic was he that up to the later years of his life, when a wound in the leg forced him to ride a donkey, he never travelled otherwise than on foot, accompanied by penitents of both sexes clad in white and black monastic

garbs, and subject to severe discipline, exhibiting no trace of the disorders which at other epochs had served to bring discredit on similar bands. There were also in his following priests to hear confessions, and choristers to chant divine office, as well as a notary to attest the reconciliations that were effected, it being the saint's main endeavour to establish peace and concord in lieu of the discord which had lately infested the clergy itself.[1] At the approach to a town the penitents formed themselves into procession to meet the inhabitants as they came forth to greet the saint, and a wild scene of confusion ensued as men struggled fiercely with each other for the privilege of approaching and touching the servant of God, whose garments were soon torn to shreds by the numbers anxious to obtain a relic of him, and who was forced to hold his hands up over his head so as to escape the kisses reverently imprinted upon them; nay, the protection of stalwart men armed with halberds was needed to save him from being crushed to death. In several towns where he preached the usual course of business, as well as the sittings of the law courts, were suspended and the shops closed, for, according to an eye-witness, "every one was ready to leave his work in order to go to hear Master Vincent: workmen quitted their labour, lawyers the law courts, and, incredible to relate, women even abandoned their toilet."

St. Vincent's sermons usually took place in the morning after he had sung high mass, and lasted not less than three,

[1] "He was wont," according to the saying of a contemporary, "to re-establish concord wherever he went."

nay, when on the Passion, often no less than six hours, being sometimes renewed in the course of the afternoon and evening. Owing to the inadequate size of the churches, a pulpit had to be specially erected for him in the market-place, which was closely packed with standing people, crowds likewise lining the windows and the roofs of the houses; while at other times, when the concourse proved still greater, he had to preach in the open field. His biographers not infrequently observe that his auditory numbered ten and twenty thousand; indeed, on one occasion at Nantes, sixty thousand persons were said to have flocked to hear him. His method was to instil a righteous fear into the souls of his hearers, and, as Jonas spoke to the people of Nineve, so Vincent, in like manner, warned them of the imminent anger of God, exhorting them to avert the divine wrath by means of penance and self-denial. The dissensions and scandals of the age he regarded as significant of the advent of Antichrist, which advent he so thunderingly proclaimed that, in the eyes of an awe-struck world, he appeared to be the very herald of the Last Judgment. One day, while preaching at Toulouse on the text: "Arise, ye dead, and come forth to judgment," we read of his diffusing such ghastly terror amongst his audience, that they repeatedly fell to the ground, as though actually summoned before the judgment seat, and loudly implored the divine mercy; whence the spot was for some time afterwards known as the valley of Jehoshaphat. The last of a course of sermons was followed by long

processions formed by the penitents and inhabitants of the town, when the whir of the discipline falling across bare shoulders would mingle weirdly with the woeful lamentations of the Passion. Such, in the main then, was the ministry which, in the space of twenty-two years, had rekindled piety and fervour in cities and in the country-side, and which had effected a truly great revival of faith and reform of morals, as well as a renewal of the spirit of peace and self-denial.

Strange to say, save for a brief sojourn in Piedmont and Liguria, St. Vincent Ferrer had never penetrated into Italy, which would doubtless have afforded him a fruitful field of labour,[1] for, at the close of the fourteenth century, we find Blessed John Dominici,[2] an Italian Dominican, lamenting the decline of Italian preaching. "There is a great dearth of the word of God," he writes, "and souls are, so to speak, hungering for this divine word." He himself had striven to the utmost of his ability to supply this need, and his Florentine sermons had been attended with much success. Nor did his example fail to stimulate another religious of the same order, Blessed Peter of Palermo,[3] who, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, successfully missionized Northern and Central Italy, before finally establishing himself in Sicily. Yet, fruitful as were these missionary

[1] There is no ground for the supposition of certain historians to the effect that St. Vincent preached in Florence and in Bologna.

[2] Born about 1357 or 1360, Dominicini ended his life as cardinal in 1419. See the work of Father Augustus Rossler, on *Cardinal Johannes Dominici.* (Freiburg, Herder, 1393.)

[3] Born in 1381, died in 1452.

harvests, they were far from possessing the fabulous abundance which had attended that of St. Vincent Ferrer, and in the designs of Providence it was reserved to a Franciscan, to St. Bernardine of Siena, to renew those spiritual wonders on Italian soil.

St. Vincent Ferrer seems to have been prophetically cognizant of the identity of his successor and destined rival, who, when St. Vincent was preaching at Alexandria in Piedmont, was present amongst the huge crowd attracted thither by news of the preacher's fame. Struck by the sermon of the illustrious Dominican, the young Franciscan succeeded in obtaining a private audience of the great preacher, and came away his soul overflowing with joy and gratitude. Let the reader judge of the people's surprise when, on renewing his sermon the next morning, Vincent suddenly broke off exclaiming, "Oh! my brethren! in this assembly there is a religious of the Minorite order, destined shortly to become illustrious throughout Italy, and whose doctrine and example will produce great fruit amongst the whole Christian people. Render, therefore, thanks to God, and let us together pray to Him that He would vouchsafe to accomplish those things which He has revealed to me. My words will soon come true, wherefore I will myself return to missionize France and Spain, leaving to this individual the charge of instructing those people of Italy, who have not yet heard my voice."[1]

[1] This event is related by the most ancient and creditable of Vincent Ferrer's biographers, Petrus Ranzanus (Book III, chap. I.). The date assigned has been subject to discussion, since several historians on the strength of some

V

During the several years that intervened ere St. Vincent Ferrer's prophecy passed into fulfilment, and Bernardine became a celebrated preacher, we find him far from neglectful of so miraculous a revelation of his life's purport. Already in the summer of the year 1405, he began preaching at a place just outside Siena, called Alberino, and hallowed to memory as the site of one of St. Francis' miracles. It chanced on the 12th of June of the same year, that while staying at the neighbouring hermitage of St. Onofrio, situated on the mount of Capriola, Bernardine was met by a vast concourse of people, attracted to the spot by reason of its being the saint's feast-day, and he suddenly felt himself drawn to address them. Mounting a tree, he began to speak, with a result similar to that which had attended his preaching at Sarziano, since this time also those who at first held him to be mad soon stood riveted to the spot. This place, with a view over Siena, from which it was separated only by a deep ravine, soon won Bernardine's heart, and he began to long to see a house of

passages of Ranzanus hold the interview to have taken place in the year 1408, while Father Faqes, on the contrary, author of a recent Life of St. Vincent Ferrer, places it in the year 1402, prior to St. Bernardine's entering religion. But what are we to make in that case of St. Vincent's words when he refers to our saint's being a Minorite? Anyhow the event must have occurred somewhere midway between the years 1402 and 1408, but, in order to still further precisionize the date, we should have to discover the precise year of Vincent Ferrer's visit to Alexandria.

Observants founded there. Luckily the existing hermitage belonged to the hospital of la Scala, the manager of which stood under a lasting debt of gratitude to Bernardine for his devotion to the sick at the time of the plague; he was therefore only too ready to grant our saint's request. And Bernardine, as soon as he had gained permission, lost no time in setting to work, setting an example of arduous manual labour by carrying stone, wood, and other building material on his own back, so that, in a very short time, a small monastery arose of which Bernardine was chosen guardian. This, then, was the convent of Capriola, destined to play so large a part in our saint's life, since he not only spent several years there, but was wont ever after to return thither in the course of his wanderings to seek the necessary quiet and repose, so that, despite the fact of its reconstruction and entire transformation at a later date, no convent in Italy is more thoroughly steeped in his memory.

Of the ten or twelve years following on the foundation of Capriola, St. Bernardine's biographers have unfortunately preserved no record. It was doubtless a time of retreat and prayerful anticipation, far from the scrutiny of public gaze. We may easily picture Bernardine to ourselves as the model friar, punctual above the rest in observing the rule and in chanting divine office, enamoured of asceticism and prayer, passing a great part of the night in tears over his own sins, over men's ingratitude, and over the Passion of Christ. Although he would brook no usurpation of the

times assigned for prayer, we read of his being otherwise easy of access and forthcoming to all who sought his counsel or advice. Nor was he by any means adverse to intellectual pursuits, but strove on the contrary, with a view to equipping himself the better for his appointed task, to advance in the knowledge of theology and Holy Scripture. Indeed, at this time he gave himself to composing sermons which, while differing doubtless in form, were (already) identical in doctrinal content with those actually delivered by him on later occasions. And at the same time he was busy preaching either at Capriola, or in the neighbouring hamlets. Whether from humility or from a sense of his own inexperience, he was observed to frequent small boroughs and villages in preference to larger towns, whence doubtless this first missionary tour has remained buried in oblivion. Moreover, esteemed as he was for his virtue by all who approached him, it is yet evident that Bernardine had so far gained little or no renown as a preacher.[1]

This period of obscurity lasted until the year 1417, when we find him, in consequence of some unknown circumstances, acting as guardian of the convent of Observants established at Fiesole, near Florence. One night the house was startled by one of the novices who, on issuing from prayer, rushed through the cloisters exclaiming: "Brother Bernardine, hide no longer the gift which God has given thee, but go forth to preach in Lombardy!"

[1] "Multis enim annis latuit, incognitumque ac obscurum ejus nomen fuit." (Maphæus Vegius.)

In vain the other monks tried to pacify him; he declared himself impelled to speak by an irresistible impulse. Bernardine was absent at the time, but, being informed on his return of what had taken place, he betook himself to prayer along with the rest of the community, to beg for a revelation of the divine will. Would it be right, was the question he asked himself, to cross the frontiers of Tuscany where up to now he had passed his days in peaceful retirement, to forsake the countryside to which his apostolic labours had hitherto been confined, and to throw himself into the surging life of the great towns? After much meditation and prayer on his own part and on that of the community, however, he became convinced that the call voiced by the novice really came direct from on high, and, being one of those with whom to hear was to obey, he no longer hesitated to follow the divine lead.

What a turning-point was this in our saint's existence! Though already attained to maturity, his earlier years seem to have been granted him only as a time of apprenticeship, during which to prepare for his true mission by acquiring a large amount of doctrinal learning, by gaining familiarity with the pulpit, and above all, by advancing in that sanctity which was to contribute not a little to the persuasiveness of his eloquence. Thus admirably equipped for entering on a wider sphere of action, Bernardine was henceforward destined to spread the word of God in copious and ceaseless abundance up to the time of his death, earning withal such extensive renown as to be proclaimed by his contemporaries "the Apostle of Italy."

CHAPTER II

MISSIONARY LIFE

(1417–27)

I. Religious state of Italy—The pagan Renaissance—Important rôle played by the Humanists—Moral decadence and princely immorality—The Guelf and Ghibelline factions.

II. Milan and the Visconti—Bernardine's sermons in Milan—His personal influence—His lovable and attractive character.

III. His sermons in various towns of Lombardy—His style of preaching—His miracles—He inveighs against factionary discord—Results obtained—Controversy with Manfred concerning the Antichrist.

IV. Bernardine in Venice and in Venetia—He propagates a devotion to the name of Jesus.

V. At Ferrara he wages war against luxury, at Bologna against gambling.

VI. Bernardine in Florence—At Volterra he exposes a tablet to public veneration on which the name of Jesus is inscribed—Miracle performed at Prato—Preaching at Siena and Arezzo.

VII. Umbria evangelized—Perugia pacified and transformed—Sojourns at Orvieto and Viterbo—Bernardine summoned to Rome by the Pope.

I

BEFORE proceeding further with our tale we would bid the reader pause to consider the moral and religious state of the people to whose needs Bernardine was about to minister, and to weigh how far his biographers were justified in adopting so sombre a view of the times. For are not such writers apt to deal too exclusively in dark colours? Nevertheless, in the present instance there was probably little or no exaggeration in the picture. For the

Church, be it remembered, had only just weathered the storm of the Great Schism, the most terrible crisis she had ever known.[1] Thirty-nine years had seen two, finally three, popes struggling for the pontificate, anathematizing each other, stultifying by overt and hidden means every attempt at union, and coining money wherewith to continue the contest while utilizing and fostering international enmities for their own ends, instead of dominating and appeasing them as the Papacy had been wont to do. These popes were reduced to plead their cause before princes and peoples, to whom, through perversion of the former order of things, they had become answerable for their conduct. Impotent to repress the disorders, which for several centuries had made many a Christian heart cry out for reform, they had rather fomented discord in all ranks of the clergy, and treated abuses with indulgence for the sake of gaining adherents to their cause or preventing secession. Is it surprising, then, that Christians witnessing such grievous scandals should make an outcry, that consciences should become restless, discipline relaxed, beliefs shaken, and that, above all, respect for the clergy should have become a thing of the past? And who could venture to hope that religion itself would escape the obloquy which had fallen upon its ministers, when the very bulwarks of the Church were attacked, and even weighty theologians

[1] It was only in 1417, the same year in which Bernardine decided to extend his sphere of action, that the schism was brought to a close by the election of Martin V.

began to devise revolutionary measures? False prophets, too, arose, who foretold the destruction or radical transformation of the Church. It is true that heresy, which was springing up in various countries, under Wickliff in England, and John Huss in Bohemia, found no home in Italy, but the same spirit manifested itself there in frivolity or scornful indifference. Churches were deserted, the Sacraments neglected, and hardly any Christian life remained, while paganism practically dominated in its stead.

The great literary monuments of antiquity, moreover, which then were being brought to light, tended, by the magic fascination which they exercised over the Italian mind, to foster this pagan tendency. Not that the Renaissance was necessarily antagonistic to Christianity. It was never condemned by the Church, which, on the contrary, gave it a friendly welcome, faithful to the old traditions which, even in an age of barbarism, had led her to encourage the study of the Classics. And amongst the Humanists, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, many were practising, some even ardent Catholics, such as Gianozzo Manetti, Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Bruni, Guarino of Verona, and Vittorino of Feltre. Nay, even the Sacred College could boast of men like Albergati, Orsini, Cesarini, Capranica, and Bessarion, whilst the papal throne itself was filled by Nicholas V and Pius II. But notwithstanding the truth of all this, it remains an undoubted fact that Humanism likewise harboured a view of life totally adverse to that of Christianity. For Humanists of this class ancient literature

was not only a noble manifestation of man's genius; it contained besides an answer to every vexed question, a solution to every kind of problem, while Catholicism they regarded as an outcome of barbarism, which had darkened, saddened and beguiled the heart of man. In this view concurred, though with slight differences in their shades of opinion, men of the literary standing of Marsuppini, Valla, Poggio, Filelfo and Beccadelli; while others, who were complete atheists, hesitated not to adopt even a blasphemous form of negation. The majority, however, whether from motives of prudence, or from the absence of any decided opinion, contented themselves with a show of wit and sarcasm at the expense of religion, cautiously refraining from any open attack, and profiting by the strange medley of Olympian mythology and Christian doctrine then in vogue in the fashionable world to promulgate their humanistic creed.[1] And all the time these secret scoffers at the clergy were seeking lucrative appointments at the hands of the Roman curia, and, though strangers to all notion of the supernatural, frequently obtained offices more or less exclusively ecclesiastical, while they, on their part, did not so much as attempt to hide the epicurean philosophy that tainted both their views and their practice. Nor was this doctrine by any means an innovation in Italy, since a century before this

[1] A striking instance of this custom is afforded us by the great bronze doors of the basilica of St. Peter's, erected in the year 1445 by Eugenius IV, a man renowned for piety and asceticism, and which display various scenes from pagan mythology, including the tale of Leda and her swan, side by side with figures of Our Lord, Our Lady and the apostles.

time we find Benevento d'Imola declaring the name of its adherents to be "legion," while Dante, in his terrific description of the plain with open sepulchres to which he dooms all heretics, ranks amongst the latter the followers of Epicurus who deny the immortality of the soul, *che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.* And so steadily had the evil increased since Dante's time, that amongst the Epicureans of the fifteenth century faith was even more radically undermined than in the days of Boccaccio, who, after a short spell of licence depicted in the *Decamerone*, was so appalled by the thought of hell that he died a fervent Christian.

The contagion of this latter paganism would not have been half so widespread if the Humanists, tainted by it, had been mere scholars, and dwellers in libraries. But this was not the case. On the contrary, they were to be met with in the ranks of political life, and enjoyed public favour —a fact eminently characteristic of the times—since the mere reputation of elegant latinity sufficed to install these men in both princely and popular favour, so that they speedily obtained every kind of dignity and emolument; nay, it was from their ranks that the secretaries of state, ambassadors, and ministers were chosen. No public ceremony could possibly take place without a speech being delivered in Ciceronian Latin. The most rigorous of the popes considered Humanists' help indispensable to the drawing up of pontifical deeds, and their presence to the dignity of the Roman court. Hence the fact sounding somewhat scandalous to our ears, but then escaping all

comment, that men of such loose principles and life as Poggio, Valla and Filelfo were employed by the curia as papal secretaries.[1] The prominence granted to such persons was indeed out of all proportion to their true merit. Not that the services rendered by them in bringing to light, deciphering and annotating ancient manuscripts can truthfully be gainsaid, but, on the other hand, no original literature ever emanated from their pen. On perusal of their writings, indeed, none of which have survived, and which, while abounding in rhetoric, exhibit a total absence of creative power, the question is apt to obtrude itself how far the repudiation of medieval Christianity, immortalized in the pages of the *Divina Commedia*, could ever have been qualified as progress. In the fifteenth century, however, when no such doubt ever crossed the public mind, it seemed impossible for any earthly glory to exceed that of the Humanists, who, in their boundless conceit, regarded themselves as embodying the genius of their time, and as constituting the pivot around which the world revolved.

Thus proudly did they constitute themselves the arbitrators of taste, conferring or withholding approbation and reason, whilst any want of appreciation on their part seemed capable of crushing the greatest genius. And unblushingly did they trade upon their position, selling themselves to the highest bidder, siding with no particular party, so as to be able to join whichever camp held out the most

[1] Thus we find Filelfo, in one of his epistles, extolling the Roman breadth of view, "*Incredibilis quædam hic libertas est.*"

pecuniary profit; fawning upon the rich, and rending their opponents, inaugurating, in fact, a new species of extortion, destined in the following century to culminate in the person of Aretino. To complete the picture, we may add that they hated and envied each other, and dealt in such abusive language as would make even the famous dispute of Trissotin and Vadius seem delicate in comparison.[1] What wonder, then, that such vices and absurdities finally culminated in a reaction against the Humanists, whose irreligion was condemned by the popes, and who became the butt of Ariosto's satire! But, at the time of which we write, at the opening of the fifteenth century, their glory was unimpaired; nay, they exercised a species of criterion of which all the world, great and small, stood in respectful awe. Even kings trembled before their judgment, for could not "one of Collucio Salutati's epistles work more mischief than an army of a thousand Florentines"?[2] Pope Eugenius IV, moreover, excuses himself for lavishing favours upon certain scholars of shady reputation by confessing his dread of their vindictive temperament; "They wield weapons," he said, "from which it is difficult to escape unharmed." And it is significant of the drift of the times that surprise was nowhere felt on hearing that generation dubbed "the age of Poggio," though so exalted a testimony to a man of letters is unparalleled in history, if

[1] For the dispute of Trissotin and Vadius see Molière's *Femmes Savante*, act iii, scene 5.

[2] Saying of John Galeas Visconti.

we except the reign of the "Philosophers" of the eighteenth century.

The decline of faith naturally brought a decline of morals in its train, nay, it was the boast of Neopaganism to have freed humanity from the yoke of self-denial, and from the stern repression in which Christianity had hitherto held it. Thus in their writings, which were at times licentious to the degree of obscenity, the most illustrious Humanists aimed amid universal applause at shattering the very basis of the old morality, as we see in Valla's dialogue *de Voluptate*, in Poggio's *Facetiæ*, and in the most abominable book of all, the *Hermaphroditus* of Beccadelli, popularly styled the Panormita, and which was the only production regarded as possibly having gone somewhat too far.

In virtue of banks, commerce and industries, Italy had grown to be the richest country in Europe, and in consequence a love of the comforts, refinements and luxuries of life was far more widespread there than in other countries, the manners and customs of which were still unpolished and well-nigh barbarous. Thus equipped, Italy proved well adapted for a display of brutal sensuality over which a newly-awakened art had but momentarily cast a veil. Enjoyment became henceforth the key to Italian existence, and was sought after even by moral men, under a more refined form. Death, even when attended by the additional horrors of the plague, seemed no longer capable of preaching eloquently enough to convert souls; nay, its very grimness proved an incentive to still greater frivolity,

stimulating the worldling, by the sense of contrast it afforded, to a still keener relish of sensual delights.

The immorality of the times is not only attested by the writings of Christian moralists who might be thought guilty of exaggeration—St. Bernardine, for instance, was wont to say that the traveller on entering Italy could perceive a peculiar stench, the result of the shameful vices with which the country was infected—but we have likewise the testimony of laymen like Vespasiano da Bisticci, a well-known Florentine biographer of the day, who declared that "Italy was full of every form of iniquity," and that "there all vices were multiplied." Of this a further and still more irrefragable proof is afforded by the number of laws and regulations then enacted to stem a torrent of immorality great enough to appal even the civil authorities. And the force of bad example emanated from the highest ranks of society, since princes no longer put curb upon their passions, and acted, to no one's surprise, as though the marriage tie were non-existent for them; nay, it was well if they drew the line at incest. Illegitimate children abounded, and it was to them that hereditary dynasties were by preference transmitted. A spotless character like that of Montefeltro of Urbino was quite the exception, while countless were men of the stamp of Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini, a man of iron, bodily and morally, without doubt a great leader of indomitable energy and eloquence, poetic and artistic besides, but capable of every crime, recoiling neither at rapine nor

assassination, dedicating a church hitherto consecrated to St. Francis to his beautiful mistress Isotta, under the impudent title of *Divæ Isottæ sacrum*.[1]

But it was not only in the recklessness of their private life that the princes of the day set so lamentable an example. During the space of a century, revolution had in most places substituted a reign of tyranny for the olden form of government, that of a republican commonwealth, and might had everywhere stepped into the shoes of right. In order, therefore, to effectually grasp at sovereignty and to maintain it amidst the stress of tragic vicissitude, these tyrants had been wont not only to exercise a singular amount of audacity, energy and craft, displaying in several instances political ability of the first order, though confined to a narrow field of action, but furthermore, conscious of having no legitimate right to their possessions, they were led to substitute unblushing corruption, violence, trickery and cruelty in its stead and to put maxims into practice of which Machiavellism was but the logical later outcome. Never indeed had government been so divorced from morality — from the very first principles of right and wrong. Such a spectacle could not fail to pervert the conscience of the public at large, by whom success came to be regarded as an excuse, nay, as a justification of the foulest deeds which, when accompanied by skilful daring, were sure to win applause, and a well-played part, no

[1] Nevertheless, a picture in the Louvre represents this far from devout *condottiere* on his knees beside the Blessed Virgin and the infant Jesus.

matter how criminal, was sure to win applause. Even the language of the day testifies to a general state of corruption. Take, for instance, the meaning of the words *onore* and *virtù*. *Onore*, as has been justly remarked, in those days no more stood for "honour" than *virtù* stood for virtue, since *onore* signified the notoriety of a dazzling success, while *virtù* was the name given to something ingenious, clever and flashy, and which, according to Machiavelli, might be allied to *scelleratezza*.[1]

If we inquire how far tyranny had succeeded in restoring order and tranquillity in Italy, we shall find that although town life was undoubtedly more tranquil than in republican days, discord was far from uprooted. For if the great ideas linked to the names of Guelph and Ghibelline had long since perished, the names themselves endured, and with them the spirit of faction, implacable and deadly. Thus, every town had its Guelph and its Ghibelline families, who, though they might have found it hard to say what were the principles for which they contended, were nevertheless animated by a mutually implacable hatred and wish to harm each other, and who took care to transmit to the generations yet unborn a tradition of enmity and rancour which became little short of a *vendetta*. One party, we find, had adopted the lion, the other the eagle, as an emblem of provocation to their opponents, whence the origin of the famous act of defiance which consisted in depicting an

[1] This remark was made by Monsieur Gebhart in a paper on the *Renaissance*, and by Monsieur Klaczko in his *Causeries florentines*.

eagle on the walls of the enemy's house humbled beneath a lion, or vice versa. And these emblems were to be found on tombstones, churches, chalices and other sacred objects. A man showed, moreover, whether he were Guelph or Ghibelline by the manner in which he wore the feather in his cap, by the cut of his puffed hose, or better still by his way of picking garlic, or of pealing a peach,[1] which things, futile in themselves, yet serve to show how deeply this party spirit had penetrated into the heart of the nation. So implacable indeed and merciless had the daily and hourly feud become, that it extended even to women and children, attacking possessions, honour and life itself, until, according to the expression of a contemporary, all Italy seemed steeped in blood.[2] Princes were in part powerless, in part, also, loth to stem the tide of civil discord, since they rightly beheld therein an effectual obstacle to any concerted action against their supremacy, and were thus even able to reap some positive benefit out of this crying public evil. Indeed, one of them, when urged to put an end to this state of things, candidly replied, "Why, it brings me in, in the way of fines, an income of twelve thousand ducats a year."

Such, then, were the serious evils which undermined the *quattrocento*, so fair in outward appearance. And Bernardine

[1] St. Bernardine's sermons contain some curious details concerning these eccentricities. *Vide* especially *Le Prediche Volgari di S. Bernardino, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. II, *Predica vigesiena terza.*

[2] "*Tanta rabies Guelforum et Gibellinorum ubique incaluerat ut cruento horrore mutuo ac fraterno sanguine maderet Italia.*" (First Life of St. Bernardine, published by the Bollandists.)

too had witnessed them—witnessed them with compassion. It was to heal these terrible wounds that he left his monastery, prepared to wander through the length and breadth of Italy, and to proclaim that message of faith, of penance, and of peace, of which the actual state of the land sufficiently proved the crying need.[1]

II

St. Bernardine decided to enter on his missionary life in Milan, where he arrived towards the close of the year 1417. It was indeed a daring enterprise to open his campaign by attacking such a stronghold, one of the most prominent cities in the peninsula. For although Milan could not be said to vie with Florence in the domain of either art or literature, the Milanese being less refined in taste, more provincial in manner, and less polished in speech, and regarded, therefore, by the Tuscans in a somewhat similar light to that in which the Athenians viewed the Boetians, yet Milan, the capital of opulent Lombardy, was not only a rich city, but both on account of her history and of her strategical position at the foot of the Alps, whose gates, so to speak, she could open or shut at will, was a place of great political importance. No wonder, then, that the city was termed the key to the Italian peninsula. During the Middle Ages in

[1] "*Pereunti seculo compatiens, assumptâ in Deo fiduciâ, coepit, et remotas urbes, et loca insignia, ac provincias peragrando, vitia et virtutes, pœnam et gloriam, fidelibus annuntiare.*" (Loc. cit.)

the days of republican municipalities, Milan occupied the first place in the famous League of Lombardy, since when the Visconti, while depriving the citizens of many ancient liberties, had yet raised the town to the capital of a great and powerful State. The Visconti were indeed a strange Titan race, recalling by their crimes the days of the worst of the Cæsars, yet withal shrewd and daring politicians, skilful administrators and lordly princes, knowing how to keep pace with royalty itself, to which by marriage they had frequently allied themselves. Not over-venturesome in personally attacking the foe they had challenged to the combat, they were versed at directing the *condottieri* from behind the tall palisades of their entrenched palaces. The disordered state of the land, moreover, emboldened them to dream of reigning over the greater part of Italy, and at times they actually succeeded in extending their dominion not only over Lombardy, Piedmont and a portion of Venetia, but also over Genoa, Pisa, Siena, Bologna, Perugia and Assisi. A precarious dominion truly, which, established in a few years by some man of genius like Giovanni Galeazzo, would melt into thin air in as few months, after his death! The Milanese had certainly to suffer under a fierce despotism which treated their rights, their goods, their lives, and the honour of their wives and daughters alike cavalierly. But although at times they lost patience with their rulers, as, for instance, in 1412, when a certain Giovanni Maria Visconti was murdered in church, because, to gratify a personal whim, he had suffered the

townsfolk to be devoured by dogs specially trained for the purpose, nevertheless no serious attempt was ever made by the Milanese to regain their lost liberty. For, in the main, they had grown used to the Visconti, were dazzled by their state, flattered by the thought of the power they had acquired, and grateful for the material prosperity thence accruing to the city. And though such sentiments were scarcely calculated to raise the public moral tone, yet in spite of all this corrupting influence the Milanese ever retained that strong religious sense, ready to be called out by any words of apostolic fervour, doubtless bequeathed to them by the great St. Ambrose, to whose memory, through the ups and downs of time, Milan had clung with a grateful tenacity.

In the year 1417 the Duchy of Milan was in the hands of Philip Maria Visconti, the last of that name, a man who seems to have inherited all the vices of his race. Gloomy, crafty and deceitful, he was likewise cruel and treacherous, quick to destroy the human tool he had utilized for his own ends, fearful and distrustful of every one, with the exception of his astrologer, confining himself within his castle walls, beyond which he never believed his life secure. Thanks, however, to the skilfulness with which his wily intrigues had been conducted, he had acquired a dominion second only to that of Giovanni Galeazzo himself.

To Milan, Bernardine now came as a complete stranger, confining himself with characteristic modesty to preaching in the churches that were of merely secondary importance,

and then only on days when it was customary to preach there. We have an account of his first sermons from Maphæus Vegius, one of the saint's biographers, who was himself among the hearers, being, as he tells us, twelve years old and at school at Milan when Bernardine first came there. The old professor who taught young Vegius grammar took such a liking for our saint's preaching, and to attract his pupils' attention to the new preacher would so frequently extol the eloquence of "the good little Brother so wretchedly clad," protesting "never to have seen his equal," that the scholars gradually began to share the admiration of their master. Thus little by little did the preacher's renown grow and prosper, till after only a few months he was invited to preach the daily Lenten sermons of the year 1418 in the principal church of the city.

The first of these Lenten sermons was marked by an incident that drew widespread attention upon Bernardine. As he was pursuing the subject of his discourse, suddenly, to the great surprise of his hearers, he broke off, and seemed for some seconds wrapt in a kind of ecstasy, after which he came down from the pulpit without attempting even to renew the thread of his sermon. On his return to the monastery he was, as may be imagined, besieged with questions, to which he at first refused to make any reply. At length, however, yielding to the entreaties of his brethren, he said, "At that moment I saw my sister Tobia,[1]

[1] Tobia, cousin of Bernardine, was one of the pious women above mentioned who tended him in his childhood.

whom I ever revered as a mother, breathe her last, and her soul clothed in immortality wing its flight to heaven." But no sooner was this noised abroad than a messenger was at once dispatched to Siena to inquire into the facts of the case,[1] and he returned with the answer that Tobia had died a holy death on the very day and at the very hour that Bernardine had discontinued his sermon. After this the crowd naturally gathered more eagerly than ever to hearken to the words of one favoured with such extraordinary visions. No mere curiosity was, however, the result, for so many conversions followed that Maphæus Vegius, in order to give us some idea of the numbers who flocked to church for confession, likens them to ants, *concurrebant ad ecclesias instar formicarum.*

Bernardine was not suffered to leave Milan till he had promised to return for next year's Lenten station. And in the meantime he was busy preaching the word of God, according to some of his biographers in Liguria and Piedmont, according to others in Emilia and Venetia. His second Lenten course in Milan was even more successful than the first, so that contemporary writers describe the whole population of the great city leaving their houses to gather in crowds around the pulpit.[2]

At this time Bernardine did not restrict himself to his public ministry, but strove to make himself all things to all men.

[1] Was this messenger sent by the inhabitants of Milan, or by Duke Philippo Maria? Upon this point his biographers do not agree.

[2] "*Tota civitas illa, quae innumero populo completa est, quasi evulsa sedibus suis, ut hunc virum sanctum amplecterentur, videbatur.*" (Bernabæus Senensis.)

And his celebrity left him as simple, as easy of access, as if he had been the most obscure religious. He never refused to discuss spiritual matters with any one who demanded his help, when he would always suit his words to the needs of each particular soul, and show as much zeal for the salvation of one fellow-creature as for the conversion of a whole population. With the erring sheep he would, indeed, tenderly remonstrate, ever ready to enfold it in the warm embrace of a charity as untiring as it was winning and inventive,[1] and even notorious sinners met with a kindly reception at his hands, for though, in his public capacity, he could denounce sin in a manner to strike terror into the hearts of his audience, yet in private he was none the less affable and gentle with the individual sinner.[2] Adverse alike to impatience and anger, gloom and melancholy, the Minorite habit had detracted nothing from his natural amiability, brightness and gaiety of disposition. Thus Æneas Sylvius remarks that our saint's countenance was never sad unless he was sorrowing over some public crime, adding that he always loved a joke, which we likewise find corroborated in a sermon by the Minorite Michele da Milano, who had known Bernardine in his youth. "He

[1] "*Non minus etiam inter privatas actiones saluti quorumcumque consulebat; nunc hortans, nunc monens, nunc pro sua quemque conditione emendans.*" (Maphæus Vegius.)

[2] "*In suggesto vero terribilis vitiorum detestator, in quotidiana conversatione ita affabilis et gratiæ plenus ut quasi Angelus Dei putaretur.*" (Bernabæus Senensis.) *Et cum publice omnium crimina acerbissime carperet, privatim, tamen neminem unquam, ipsos etiam domesticos et inferiores, nisi dulciter arguerit.*" (Maphæus Vegius.)

was very bright," he says, "always joyous and gay." Fra Michele, moreover, continues to relate how a religious, somewhat rigid and narrow in his views, had taken scandal at Bernardine's gaiety of heart till he observed the miracles worked by the saint's relics after death, when, struck with repentance, he visited the body so as to make public atonement.[1]

Gaiety was not only a characteristic of the Sienese, but also thoroughly in accordance with the teaching and example of St. Francis, who looked upon sadness as one of the greatest spiritual evils, raising joyousness to the rank of a monastic virtue, on a level with chastity and obedience itself. Moreover, he held that amiability and what he styled "courtesy" added to the lustre of charity. "Brother," said he one day to a novice, "why such a doleful countenance? Have you committed a sin? Well, if so, that is a matter concerning God and your own soul. Betake yourself to prayer. But before me and the brethren let there always be a holy and pleasing joyousness on your countenance, for it is unbecoming that one in the service of God should wear a gloomy and sullen mien." Nay, at one of the general chapters of the order he caused the following instructions to be posted up in large letters: "Let the brethren ever avoid appearing morose, sad, or melancholy, as are hypocrites, but let them, on the contrary, be ever joyful in the Lord, amiable, gracious and gay at all times as

[1] *Cinque Prediche a Monache*, published by Fra Marcellino da Civezza (Prato, 1881), p. 109.

is right and fitting." Thus in this, as in all other matters, Bernardine proved his filial attachment to the saint of Assisi.

III

Bernardine had entered Milan unknown and a stranger, he left it a celebrity. From that time forth, indeed, various cities contended for the honour of harbouring him and hearing his voice, so that from 1419 to 1422 we find him preaching in various towns in Lombardy—notably at Bergamo, Como, Mantua, Cremona, Piacenza, Crema and Brescia.[1] He travelled from place to place, remaining nowhere above a few weeks, preaching daily and giving himself not a moment's respite. "*Semper docens*," runs the vigorous account of an ancient biography, "*semper instans, semper insudans, semper ad Dei amorem omnium animos incitans.*" And these journeys were all made on foot. One of his incidental difficulties arose from the vehement desire of the inhabitants of some of the villages he traversed to detain him longer.[2] Yet preaching the Gospel to these humble country folk constituted his delight, and his style then became simple, familiar and abounding in imagery so as to suit their capacity.[3] In the towns the crowds assembled

[1] It is only by putting together the information gleaned from various contemporary biographies that a fairly exact idea of his tour of preaching can be obtained. Some dates, however, still remain uncertain, though these are matters of small importance.

[2] "*Itaque*," says Bernabæus Senensis, "*tibi difficile erat gressum per oppida et villas coloniasque habere.*"

[3] He spoke to them, according to the testimony of Bernabæus, *grosso modo et per figuram quamdam.*

to hear him were at times so great, that it became necessary to erect a pulpit on the market-place, the men of the auditory being separated from their women-folk by a rope or canvas stretched across the square. Like St. Vincent Ferrer, also, he usually preached at dawn, after having previously said Mass. His hearers, so as to ensure themselves standing room, would arrive beforehand, many coming from far distant villages, children carried on the shoulders of their fathers, or borne in their mothers' arms. The sermons often lasted three or four hours, nothing unusual in those days when the Minorites would seem to have forgotten the injunction to preachers left by St. Francis in his rule and recommending "brevity of discourse" in imitation of the Lord, "Who abbreviated His discourse upon earth." Yet Bernardine's zeal was proof against all fatigue. Once during the vintage, at Cremona, he decided to preach at night time, and he himself assures us that "by daybreak he had already preached for four hours."[1] But however lengthy his sermons might be, they were listened to, says Æneas Sylvius, with "incredible attention." Nor did the preacher ever fail to stimulate and rivet the minds of his hearers by his happy choice of subjects and the variety of their treatment, as well as by the charm of his occasional digressions. These, we are assured by Maphæus Vegius, grew the more plentiful on great feast-days, and in proportion to the number and fixed character of his

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. I, p. 285, 286.

audience. He would then cease to adhere to any special scheme, but pass rapidly from one idea to another, allowing his naturally pleasant fancy free play, and allying quaint imagery to the gravest thoughts, in order to interest and enliven his hearers, and so captivate their attention.

While possessed of singular sweetness, his voice was at the same time clear, distinct and sonorous, penetrating and far-reaching, adapting itself with marvellous flexibility to all the multiple exigencies of oratory, to the rendering of thoughts by turn simple and lofty, tragic and gay, poignant and witty.[1] Contemporary writers are, indeed, untiring in their praise of his *pronuntiatio*—a tribute fully appreciable only by such as are familiar with the musical sound of Italian on Tuscan lips. And this melodious utterance was said to have a supernatural origin, for not long after his profession, when he first began to preach, his voice was so hoarse that he was by several persons declared incapable of public speaking. Hearing which, the young friar betook himself to prayer, beseeching God to cure this impediment, if preaching were indeed his vocation. And lo! in answer to this petition a ball of fire descended on his tongue and henceforth his utterance was perfectly distinct. This charm of delivery was accompanied by so lucid and vivacious a gesticulation of the kind peculiar to Italians, that the drift

[1] "*Sermo purus ac dilucidus, vox sonora, grandia latera, potens cum resonantissimâ voce oratio, cum dulcis et suavis tum etiam tristis et gravis, et ita flexibilis, ut eam quocumque vellet facile contorqueret.*" (Bernabæus Senensis.) "*Vox lenis, clara, sonora, distincta, explicata, solida, penetrans, plena, redundans, elevata atque efficax erat.*" (Maphæus Vegius.)

of his sermons could practically be understood even by such as were too far off to catch his words.[1] And yet this vivacity of gesture in nowise impaired that innate dignity of manner which sufficed to ensure him respect and veneration.[2] At this time, too, he still retained something of that youthful beauty of form and feature,[3] destined by dint of fatigue and austerity to dwindle from year to year, until his face became finally drawn and wrinkled, giving him an appearance of extreme asceticism, an impression still further enhanced by the sordid poverty of his clothing. So mortified, indeed, was his exterior that those who saw him shortly afterwards at Bologna declared him to be the living image of St. Francis.[4]

The fame of his miracles, which soon spread far and wide, contributed not a little to the increase of our preacher's renown. Nor must the reader take it amiss if, among such a number of prodigies, we are forced to select and to confine our attention to one in particular, that, namely, alleged to have taken place in the year 1420, while

[1] Maphæus Vegius, after speaking of his gestures, says, "*Quibus adeo miro naturæ munere valebat, ut nequisquam illum quamvis doctus atque omni arte instructus mimus anteiret.*"

[2] One of his biographers insists on the fact that his words were never *ridiculi*.

[3] "*Pulchra facie*," says Bernabæus, "*atque aspectu quidem venerandâ*. Maphæus Vegius describes him as "*Venustas oris, letitia vultus, totiusque decor corporis.*"

[4] "*Sordidus erat corporis ejus amictus, mira jejuniis contracta macies, asperitatem ac rigiditatem undique spirans indoles, ita ut qui eum cernerent, beatum ipsum Franciscum se videre putarent.*" Sigonius, *De Episcopis Bononiensibus*, Lib. IV, quoted by Wadding, Vol. X, p. 71.

Bernardine was preaching at Mantua,[1] and where, in order to get from the convent at which he was staying to the town where he was to preach, he had to cross over a sheet of water. On one occasion, we are told, being in a great hurry to begin his sermon, he begged the boatman to row him across for love. The latter, however, who suspected the friar of secretly carrying some money about him, demanded payment. In vain did Bernardine seek to convince him of his entire destitution, and to propitiate him by dwelling on the impatience which must be seizing his waiting audience; the boatman once and for all refused to serve him gratis. Then the saint turning towards the friar who accompanied him, said to him, "Brother, have you entire trust in the Lord?" "Certainly," was the reply. "Will you imitate exactly what I am about to do?" was the next query. "Yes," said the friar. Whereupon, Bernardine, spreading out his mantle on the face of the waters and stepping thereon together with his companion, they both fell on their knees and, with eyes and hands raised supplicatingly towards heaven, gained the opposite shore so rapidly that, when they were already on dry land, the boat was still only midway across the lake. And those who beheld this wonderful scene from the skiff and from the shore, confounded at the sight, prayed aloud. "The account of this wonderful miracle," says one of the saint's biographers, "I have from the lips of an old priest who had struck up a great friendship with Bernardine in his

[1] Several of his biographers insist on placing this miracle in the year 1423.

youth and who, with his own eyes, had seen him walking on the water."

Far from repeating the same set sermons without paying attention to the specific needs of the assembly he addressed, Bernardine, on the contrary, never failed to suit the matter of his discourse to the wants of his hearers, so that he came to be compared to a doctor who modifies his prescription in accordance with the patient's disease. Thus we find our saint, during this his first visit to Lombardy, constantly inveighing against those Guelf and Ghibelline factions, which had been the cause of bloodshed and strife not only in the more prominent towns, but likewise in hamlets and country villages. Such was the party strife at Bergamo and in the neighbouring heights that, according to the words of an old chronicle, "murder was the undisputed master from whose clutches neither old men nor women and children could escape, while no species of cruelty was left unemployed."[1] At Brescia, indeed, Guelfs and Ghibellines not only massacred one another by turns, holding the flesh of the victims up for sale, but they succeeded in wresting a permit from John Maria Visconti authorizing them to prosecute their feuds and to commit all manner of crime during the space of six months.

It was on such troubled waters as these that Bernardine came to pour oil by proclaiming that doctrine of fraternal peace which the followers of St. Francis, true to his teach-

[1] Marcus Antonius Bonalius, *In Commentariis de vitâ et gestis Sanctorum Bergomatum.*

ing, had never ceased to inculcate as the only efficacious remedy for such predominant discord. For had it not been one of the last acts of the Poverello's life to compose an additional stanza to his "cantico del Sole" in praise of those animated by a spirit of peace and of forgiveness, and had not the mere recitation of these lines sufficed to put an end to civil war within his native town? And had not "peace, peace, for the love of Christ crucified" been St. Catherine of Siena's device at the close of the fourteenth century?

To assuage passions so deadly he had to resort to many skilful manœuvres dictated by his untiring zeal, artfully coaxing and bringing his hearers round to a saner frame of mind before openly upbraiding them. And yet, despite these persevering efforts, he was by no means invariably successful; in some places, such as Como, his words failed altogether to take effect. As a rule, however, his preaching was productive of at least a temporary reconciliation, when factionary emblems were effaced from the walls and when charitable sodalities arose in place of party leagues. At Bergamo and at Brescia his success was complete,[1] and so great was the renown of the reconciliation effected by the saint between the hostile cities of Treviglio and Caravaggio that the expanse between the two towns where he had preached on the occasion was long known as

[1] Bernabæus Senensis in speaking of Brescia, says: "*Perfidissima ac induratissima eorum consuetudo corruptarum partium, omnino suo divino et resonanti verbo funditus deleta est.*"

"the field of peace." Later on, in a sermon to the Sienese, dwelling on the salutary effect of his words at Crema, he tells us how, in consequence of civil dissensions, a number of the citizens had been exiled. In this instance Bernardine relates how he began by prudently confining himself to the question of morals in general until, having thereby won the people's confidence, they came one by one to seek his advice, and only then did he begin to go more into detail. "And yet," he continues, "while preaching to the best of my ability, I left the main work to God and to themselves. Thus it occurred to me, during one of my sermons, to dwell on that great cry for vengeance sent up by persecuted righteousness before the throne of God, which words of mine so awoke the people's conscience that they convened a meeting whereat presided marvellous unanimity and at which it was decided that those who had been banished might return. Afterwards, on leaving Crema, at a village about ten miles off, I chanced to light upon one of the exiles, who possessed property at Crema to the value of about forty thousand florins, and who asked me 'what was the general state of affairs?' To which I replied: 'By God's grace, you shall return to your home, for I myself have witnessed their good intentions.' He, however, only laughed my words to scorn. But when, shortly afterwards, a messenger came with the tidings that he was free to return home at will, his joy at the news was such that he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep. He came to me, joy intercepting his speech; and in this state he remained

for several days before his return to Crema. And lo! when he got back to his house, he found his old enemy awaiting him, who no sooner caught sight of him than he ran forward to embrace him and to carry him off to sup with him. And, while he was at table, another man who had appropriated his house hastened to remove his goods and chattels, taking care, however, to leave the exile's things unmolested. Nay, one, who was in possession of many of the latter's goods, lost no time in restoring them to the owner, so that in this way he regained his bed, his coffers, his cooking utensils, his casks of wine, and his money, and was able that same night to be reinstalled in his old home and sleep in his own bed surrounded by his old possessions. And with what joy was both his furniture and clothing given up to him, while shortly after came the owners of his horses and cattle with beaming countenances, saying: 'Behold, your oxen, your asses and your sheep!' And this went on until he found himself once more in possession of all his goods. And the like good fortune befell the other exiles. Nay, I believe that on this account, God has safeguarded that district from many perils, for, several other towns following the good example set by Crema, that region is now one of the most flourishing in the whole of Lombardy."[1]

It was during these first years of his missionary career, though the precise date is hard to ascertain, that St. Ber-

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. I, p. 285 *et seq.*

nardine preached in Liguria and Piedmont, especially at Tortona, Castelnuovo and Alexandria, where his meeting with St. Vincent Ferrer had taken place. The inhabitants of these towns he found strangely perturbed by the preaching of a Dominican, Manfred by name, a pious and cultivated friar, though one of unsound judgment and fantastic imagination, who was going about proclaiming the immediate coming of Antichrist. This idea was not only prevalent at the time of the Great Schism, when many devout men held such a scandalous state of things to be a sure indication of the proximity of the last day, but it had been likewise sanctioned by St. Vincent Ferrer, who, by asserting the judgment to be at hand and the birth of Antichrist to have already taken place, aimed at inducing his petrified audience to do penance. Thus Manfred was not without a precedent for the awful prognostications he addressed to the citizens of Alexandria and the neighbouring towns, and which so transformed this part of the world, that, at his word, men and women, to the number of about four hundred, left their homes, and formed themselves into a sodality of penitents, which followed the preacher about from place to place, leading, it must be admitted, the most exemplary life. Among other fallacies, indeed, Manfred maintained that, in view of the peril to salvation entailed by this speedy advent of Antichrist, a husband or wife was free to dissolve his or her marriage bond, even without mutual consent, in order the better to prepare by a life of exclusive prayer and penance for the great crisis at hand.

Informed of these proceedings, Bernardine deemed it his duty to combat, both orally and by his pen, doctrines so replete with terror and so antagonistic to the Franciscan spirit of love, peace and joy.[1] In fact, he even went so far as to draw the attention of the inquisitor of Alexandria and of the Dominican superior-general towards this novel sect—an act which, while possibly hindering the further dissemination of the obnoxious tenets, did not succeed in triumphing over the founder's blind obstinacy or that of his disciples, who had followed their master to Bologna, Florence and Rome to await the coming of Antichrist in prayer and penance. Nay, even the Pope's endeavour to disperse and make them return to their homes proved futile, while several penitents fell a prey to hallucinations. In any case, the prominent part played by Bernardine in the opposition sufficed to kindle the wrath of Manfred's partisans against him, and their acts of vengeance we shall later on have cause to refer to.

[1] In one of Bernardine's sermons, delivered at Siena in 1427, the following passage occurs:—"It has often been said, and I, in my youth, have myself heard it said, that the Antichrist was born. But was he not already said to be born in the days of the apostles and in those of St. Bernard? And the same has been repeated to-day—and was it not only some time ago spoken of as a certainty? Oh! what folly animates those who pretend to divine things which God does not wish them to know. Who among us can know such a thing? Not a creature alive can know it, since God, Christ Jesus, did not reveal it to his disciples, and even Christ, as man, could not know it." *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. I, p. 68. The same idea occurs in another sermon, Vol. II, p. 375.

IV

In the year 1422 we find our saint amid quite other surroundings, the renown of his preaching having penetrated as far as Venice and aroused Venetian curiosity. Venice, then at the pinnacle of its power and prosperity, living in blissful ignorance of the death-blow which the discovery of America was ere long to deal at its proud preeminence, is unique among Italian towns as regards its history and destiny, its traditions and specific genius, and even as regards its external aspect. For although, owing to its constant acquisition of new territory, Venetia had come to be regarded as one of the most prominent of Italian States, and had, as a natural consequence, been led to take part in the political dissensions of the Peninsula, nevertheless, as a commercial and colonizing power, it was markedly oriental in character. Hence the conservatism underlying its aristocratic institutions, and contrasting so oddly with the revolutionary radicalism of towns like Milan, Florence, Siena and Bologna. Less speedily enthralled than these by the spirit of the Renaissance, Venice had, moreover, clung with greater tenacity to the heroic, austere and mystic ideal of bygone days. Fifteenth-century Venice, wherein faith was still allied to patriotism, must, indeed, be held totally distinct from the more familiar city of the sixteenth century replete with pagan voluptuousness, and which Paul Veronese has immortalized

on the ceiling of one of the halls of the palace of the Doges. These two phases of Venetian history are, in fact, as opposed as a Bellini Madonna is to a Titian Venus! So fervent, indeed, was Venice at the time of which we write that, fifty years after our saint's visit, the French Ambassador Commines, struck with amazement at such splendour, not only declared it to be "the most prosperous city he had ever seen," but furthermore added, "It is likewise the best regulated, and that wherein divine service is performed with most solemnity."

To citizens mercifully protected from the scourge of Guelf and Ghibelline contention Bernardine had no need to dwell on the virtue of peace and concord as he had done in Lombardy, but, apt as ever at suiting his words to his audience, in this city of merchants he treats of commerce, and, while commending its pursuit,[1] draws attention to the moral laws which should preside over it, exemplifying in detail the various licit and illicit forms of gain.[2] By this means he held both the nobles and the lower classes riveted to the pulpit for several consecutive months. And yet this personal ascendancy he employed only to urge the people to found a Cistercian monastery and a hospital for the plague-stricken on two of the neighbouring islands. No wonder that his stay in Venice became a bright spot in his memory, so that, in the course of a sermon to the Sienese,

[1] "*Mercaturam sanctissime laudavit.*" (Bernabæus.)

[2] "*Quid sit honestum locando, vendendo, ut religio Christianorum permittit, docens.*" (*Ibid.*)

we find him evoking that enchanting spectacle of a floating city, and of those countless ships and galleys, canoes and gondolas of motley form and shape which sailed Venetian seas.[1] Above all, however, he recalls his amazement at the concord reigning within its walls; nor did Venice fail to become in his eyes the pattern for all cities rent by civil strife.[2]

After leaving Venice Bernardine tarried some time longer on Venetian territory, making a more lengthy stay in the towns and a shorter one in the country villages he passed on his way. At Verona, where he preached in the cathedral from 1 November, 1422, till 17 January, 1423, his arrival was heralded by rumours of a stupendous miracle. At a short distance from the town, namely, the dead body of a man had been discovered underneath a tree, where he had met his death by accident only a short time previously, at the sight of which the saint was alleged to have betaken himself to prayer and thus to have obtained the resurrection of the dead to life. The Veronese gave proof of their esteem for the preacher by issuing a decree at his entreaty, according to which the commemorative games hitherto held on the first Sunday after Ash Wednesday were in future to take place before the beginning of Lent. At Vicenza, where he tarried from 16 April to 30 June, 1423, the concourse of people assembled to hear him was so great

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. I, p. 384.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 17.

that he was compelled to address them, on feast-days, in the market-place, where some twenty to thirty thousand persons were congregated around the pulpit, and afterwards wended their way in huge processions through the town. Traces are likewise to be found of our saint's visits to Bassano, Treviso and to a place designated by the old chronicler as Virunum, apparently identical with the present Friesach in Illyria, a place situated on the outskirts of the Venetian territory, where St. Bernardine not only pacified bloody strife, but caused a bonfire to be made of all hostile badges and emblems,[1] and where his memory was long and fervently cherished. In the September of 1423 we find him preaching in another mountainous part, at Belluno, which had sent two of its most influential citizens to entreat him to come to their assistance in pacifying a town where party strife was as rife as ever it had been in Lombardy. Not only the public archives, but even private houses could there produce lists on which all the city families were enrolled, categorized according to the faction to which they belonged—a device intended to assist the memory of the temporarily reigning party to the detriment of that momentarily dethroned.

Received with open arms by the people and by the town officials, who lost no time in having a pulpit erected on the largest square of the place, Bernardine began, according to his wont, by a skilful circumvention of the burning topic, until the day for battle came, when his words were so in-

[1] "*Flammâ consumptis pestiferis ordinibus. . . .*"

cisive that the citizens resolved, after solemn deliberation and as a pledge of confirmed peace, to destroy all the obnoxious lists. A brief stay at Feltre hereupon brought our saint's tour through Venetia to a close.

It was in the course of these sermons delivered at Venice, and in the cities of Venetia, that Bernardine's zeal for the propagation of devotion to the holy name first began openly to assert itself.[1] This devotion, which may be said to date back to the Pauline saying, "*In nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur*," had been specially fostered by the Franciscan order. We find St. Francis of Assisi making it the theme of many pious exhortations, while, according to the testimony of the most reliable of his biographers, the holy name never crossed the *Poverello's* lips without his voice faltering as though he were inwardly entranced by a heavenly melody. Nor was his example lost on St. Bonaventure, the author of a leaflet, *De laude melliflui nominis Jesu.* Bernardine was, therefore, no innovator in striving to rekindle popular fervour towards a devotion which, though heretofore greatly in vogue, had, in his day, been cast somewhat into the shade. In his sermons our saint was for ever extolling the beauty and majesty, the mystery and efficacy of the name of Jesus, and in order outwardly to embody the sentiments of piety he sought to instil into their hearts we find him calling upon his hearers to inscribe

[1] According to Wadding, Bernardine's first mention of this his favourite theme had occurred at Florence, in the year 1417, but buried as he then was in obscurity, his words had taken no widespread effect.

the holy name or one of its customary abbreviations[1] on the walls alike of public buildings and of private houses. He himself had adopted the monogram I.H.S.,[2] which he loved to see surrounded by a circle of golden rays. And the adoption of this symbol he deemed particularly opportune in a land so overrun by paganism, since he hoped to see the same substituted for the Guelf and Ghibelline emblems with which the walls then literally swarmed, and so to set an outward seal on inward peace of heart. And the practice was adopted, and spread like wildfire throughout Venetia, where both officials and private individuals vied with one another in everywhere printing or carving the sacred monogram,[3] encircled by rays, until it finally became significant of Bernardine's passage and of the popular assent to his word.

[1] These abbreviations date from the earliest days of Christianity, when we already meet with either the letter I or the letters I.H. or I.H.E., signifying Ἰησοῦς, on coins and medals, while the Latin version of the σίγμα, C, also occurs in the form of I.C. or I.H.C. Later on, the I.H.S. or I.h.S. seems to have come into use, the Latin *h* having been erroneously substituted for the H, the capital of the Greek letter ἦτα. It is interesting to note that it was owing to this ἦτα that the holy name was generally throughout the Middle Ages spelt thus, *Jhesus*. On the tomb of St. Colette, whose death occurred in 1447, we find it written *Jhs-Christ*. St. Ignatius and the Jesuit Order later on adopted our saint's monogram, I.H.S.

[2] These three letters were written in Gothic letters, the I partially resembling the Y. The H was generally surmounted by a tiny cross.

[3] "*Nomen Domini nostri Jesu Christi tantum honoravit, quod omnes populi Venetorum, tum sanctorum templis, tum privatis domibus, aureis quidem litteris rutilantibus radiis nomen sanctum Salvatoris nostri parietibus honoratissimè pinxere.* (Bernabæus.)

V

During the opening months of the year 1424, leaving Venetia behind him, Bernardine, at the request of Duke Nicholas d'Este, bent his steps towards Ferrara. Dissolute, crafty and cruel like the rest of his race, over whose vices time has indulgently cast a veil of greatness, Nicholas was no whit better than his ancestors, who habitually strove to oppress and even to contaminate the clergy—a fact apparently ill in keeping with his pressing invitation to our saint. But he was not the only prince of that day, be it remembered, who, while himself addicted to a mode of life the opposite of devout, yet deemed it advisable to diminish the demoralizing effect of his own example by advocating a stirring form of moral teaching. Although his dominions, even after the addition of Modena, were far from reckoning among the most prominent of the Peninsula, yet his capital, then said to number 100,000 inhabitants, was renowned far and wide for the splendour of its court and the magnificence of its public feasts, for its polished elegance of manners and the sumptuous ostentation that reigned within its walls. Thus Bernardine here came to dwell on the evils wrought by excess of luxury and on the immodesty of apparel which, as common to every age as human vanity and female coquetry, was nevertheless particularly widespread at the close of the Middle Ages as a reaction from the barbarism of the preceding age, if at least the tales of Italian and French, German

and English chroniclers are to be credited, who abound with details of the extravagance of the fashions of the period.[1] Nor was the topic by any means an infrequent one with preachers of the day. St. Vincent Ferrer, for one, had often taken it as his theme, as may be gathered from the remarks of an old historian who, in speaking of the saint's sermons at Angers, observes: "During this month he caused the crest of vanity to fall from off the women's heads"; and he it was who persuaded the Genoese women to adopt the demurely graceful white mantilla worn down to the present day. Nor was the campaign against these excesses of the period confined to the pulpit, for it was equally hotly pursued by the executive, which claimed to exercise judicial control over the details of female attire, to put a curb on its extravagance, and to regulate even the length of trains and the width of sleeves. But these measures were as unavailing as such peremptory enactions are wont to be.[2] Not so, however, our saint's words, since we read of how Bernardine moved the hearts of the women of Ferrara, in restraining their licence, in moderating their luxury in the way of dress, and in imposing fashions more in keeping with decency.[3]

[1] It has been calculated that some of the gold brocade dresses must have cost roughly from £1666 to £2083 of our money.

[2] Many regulations of this description are to be found in the archives of the many small states of Italy. See, for instance, at Siena the volumes entitled: *Spoglio delle deliberazioni del consiglio della Campana*, and likewise, *Spoglio delle deliberazioni del consiglio generale dell' archivio delle Riformazioni di Siena.* See also Carlo Faletti-Fossati's *Costumi Senesi nella seconda meta del secolo XIV.* (Siena, 1882.)

[3] "*Effraenatam licentiam mulierum coercens, pompas earum in vestitu et gestu moderavit.* (Bernabæus Senensis.)

Ferrara lay on the borders of the papal states, and was by no means exempt from the party strife which harassed the rest of Italy. During the time of the papal exile in Avignon and during that of the Great Schism, indeed, Rome was not only depopulated and ransacked, but was a prey to factions and brigandage, while many towns in the Patrimony itself, in Umbria, in the Marches and in Romagna had even gone so far as to proclaim themselves independent republics and principalities. Occasionally, some daring *condottiere*, of the type of Braccio da Montana, was actually bold enough to aim at acquiring part of the papal dominions — an attitude summarized by Macchiavelli a hundred years later in the observation: "Formerly no baron was insignificant enough not to contemn papal authority." Indeed, so marked was this antagonism that when the papal election of the year 1417 gave an undisputed head to the Church in the person of Martin V, the latter had first to remain for three whole years in Lombardy before venturing to enter his own dominions, being reduced meanwhile to a state of abjection that elicited the gibes of the street urchins of Florence as they mockingly followed him down the street. Nevertheless, thanks to his ability and resolution, Martin lost no time in attempting to regain his authority alike by political and by warlike means. Nor did he aim merely at the re-establishment of the complex, wavering and often contested suzerainty which had sufficed his predecessors; on the contrary, he strove to substitute a direct and absolute rule in its stead. But a policy with

so many past traditions, as well as foreign claims and encroachments, to contend with, could not possibly be successful in a day, and had to undergo many vicissitudes until brought to a triumphant issue by the unscrupulous ambition of the Borgia family and by the martial valour of Pope Julius II.

Among the towns belonging to the papal states, Bologna was noted for its discord and dissensions. At the accession of Martin V, indeed, it had gloried in its republic independence, and though this had been abolished and the city reduced, by sheer force of arms, to its former state of allegiance to the Papacy, its submission was very far from complete, and we find the Pope forced to quell the constant revolts by laying the city under interdict. Political dissensions had still further aggravated the turbulent state of public affairs, while the moral tone was lowered by the creation and propagation of gambling-tables, where men of every age and condition in life played away their all and gave themselves up to debauchery. In vain did Albergati, the bishop of the diocese and future cardinal, one of the purest and noblest priestly figures of the day, seek by means of exhortation and rigorous measures to stem the tide of iniquity, so that, his every effort having failed, he resolved, as a last resource, to solicit the aid of the preacher, whose labours in Lombardy and Venetia were said to have been attended by such fruitful results.

Needless to say, Bernardine responded to this appeal and, after gathering all necessary information from Albergati

as regards the popular train of thought, undertook to deliver the Lenten course of sermons. This was in the year 1424. In accordance with his self-prescribed tactics, however, it was not until he grew conscious of having gained the confidence of his audience, that he forsook the path of generalities and announced his intention of dealing with the subject of games of hazard. Thus notified the people congregated in such numbers, that the vast nave of the church of San Petronio could not contain the crowd. A pulpit had to be erected in the open, and so great was the force and pathos of the preacher's eloquence that he ended by so far uprooting this vice that, during the last days of Lent, the gamblers came one by one to deposit their gaming implements with the saint, who, after amassing a huge quantity of these objects, caused them to be made into a great bonfire, which he himself kindled amid the applause of the assembled multitude.[1] There was one class of persons, however, to whom this spectacle afforded no kind of satisfaction, and those were the card manufacturers and sellers, one of whom came to Bernardine with the complaint that he was depriving him of his living. Whereupon the following conversation is reported to have taken place between them. "Have you no other trade?" asked the saint, and, on the other's replying in the negative, "Well, then," said Bernardine,

[1] "*Populo ipso approbante.*" Such bonfires were a common occurrence among the popular preachers of the day, and were called in Italy *abbruciamenti delle vanità*. In French contemporary chronicles they are likewise often referred to.

"if you do as I bid you, you shall have enough to live upon." "Gladly will I do so," was the rejoinder. Whereupon the preacher, taking a compass to hand, described a circle on a tablet, in the centre of which he drew the I.H.S. surrounded by rays, saying to the man: "Go and do likewise, and you shall regain your livelihood." The card manufacturer did as he was told, and, since the people were soon smitten by this novel fashion of honouring the holy name, it was not long ere he had made far more profit than he had realized by his former business. And this was the origin of the tablets destined to figure more than once in our saint's life.

Not content with crushing this demoralizing gambling craze, Bernardine furthermore strove to allay the spirit of faction and of revolt prevalent in Bologna, and though the subsequent history of the town forbids our declaring this evil tendency to have been entirely undermined, yet our saint undoubtedly effected a temporary restoration of peace, and, in the words of an old chronicler, "a great calm was for a time re-established within the city walls."[1]

VI

The time had now come for Bernardine to return to Tuscany, which he had left, seven years previously, an unknown man. During his stay at Bologna he had received a Flor-

[1] "*Paceque et concordiâ inter cives factâ, magna tranquillitas aliquandiù in urbe integrata est.*" (Bernabæus.)

entine deputation come to give expression to the general longing of the city to hear him preach,[1] in consequence of which our saint betook himself to Florence in the course of the summer of 1424.[2] Florence was, at this time especially, wholly under the dominion of the Renaissance; it was there, in fact, that the new culture destined to spread throughout Europe had originated. And nowhere else had it so succeeded in moulding the conduct of both public and private affairs. There congregated the Humanists of greatest renown, there flourished the greatest artists. In 1424, the year of Bernardine's visit, Brunelleschi was still busy over his designs for the cupola of Santa Maria dei Fiori; Donatello's martial statue of St. George for the church of Orsanmichele was already completed; and Masolino was at work over the frescoes which were to decorate the Brancacci chapel and to which Masaccio was to give the finishing touch. Among the Florentines of the fifteenth century, indeed, this æsthetic delight bequeathed by an artistic and literary revival came in a measure to compensate for the loss of the keener interest centring in the political upheavals of a bygone day. For though Florence, in contrast to the

[1] " . . . . *quoniam avidissimè eum omnes Florentini expectabant.*" (Bernabæus.)

[2] According to the journal of Infessura, Secretary of the Roman Senate, the June of 1424 found Bernardine preaching in Rome, and on the 21st of the month a great *abbruciamento delle vanità* took place in the square on the Capitol. This stay in Rome, however, seems to me difficult to interpose between those at Bologna and Florence, so that we have been led to infer some confusion in the date. But, as we have already had occasion to remark, the chronology of our saint's movements is, in several instances, somewhat uncertain.

majority of Italian cities, was still outwardly a republic, yet it was so in little more than in name, as slowly but surely, and without show of violence, the power of the Medicis sapped its remaining privileges. And thus the turbulent combative citizens of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, so easily roused to revolt and civil war, came to be extinct, and in their place arose a society of merchants and bankers, whose counting-houses were distributed in every known corner of the globe, and whose sole object in life was the acquirement of money and the spending it in accordance with the elegant, refined dilettantism of a fastidious, epicurean age. What a thing of a remote past was Florence, the *sobria e pudica* which Dante, two hundred years previously, had already mourned as dead!

Yet it must not be inferred herefrom that the Florentines had grown indifferent in religious concerns, for so keen had been their appreciation of the blessed John Dominici, at the beginning of the century, that they had addressed a petition to the Pope entreating him to forbid the preacher's departure. This Dominici, a preaching friar who, in 1419, died as Cardinal Archbishop of Ragusa, had, in the year 1400, founded at Fiesole, on a site overlooking the Franciscan house whence Bernardine was to embark on his missionary career, a Dominican convent destined to become a veritable refuge of sanctity, and to cast its lustre upon Florence for a considerable length of time. Here blessed Laurence of Ripafratta, a luminary in the spiritual life, held the office of novice-master, and the same walls

witnessed the religious profession of two close friends, all but contemporaries, and both destined in later life to attain high renown. One of these was Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, known to posterity as Fra Angelico, that flowery mystic and seer of heavenly visions who seems to have imbibed the atmosphere of Assisi during the thirteenth century, rather than that of the pagan Renaissance wherein his lot was cast. The other was St. Antonine, who, after presiding over and reforming a number of convents, finally saw the archbishopric of Florence thrust upon him, in testimony of popular veneration. Lastly, it was to this same convent at Fiesole that we owe the foundation, in 1436, of the famous Florentine convent of San Marco, whence issued, at the close of the century, that great and unfortunate friar, Savonarola, who by his sermons, far surpassing Dominici's in renown, and by sheer force of virtue and eloquence, was enabled from the steps of the pulpit to hold several years' undisputed sway over no ascetic medieval town, but over Florence, under Medici rule, and reclaimed, as it were, from paganism.

It is, therefore, by no means surprising that on the spot where Dominici had met with so enthusiastic a reception and which Savonarola was one day to take by storm, Bernardine should have encountered an audience alive with interest and curiosity. Great success attended the sermons preached in the Franciscan church of Santa Croce on the crying public evils. "Having found the city in a general state of corruption," says a Florentine chronicler of the

day, "he succeeded, thanks to the good disposition of the inhabitants, in transforming and, so to speak, refounding it."[1] And as at Bologna, so also here in Florence, the women came bringing the various adornments of their toilet, such as locks of false hair, to the preacher who burned them together with gaming implements. On the façade of the church of Santa Croce, moreover, the Florentines had the I.H.S. beautifully depicted encircled by golden rays, so as to stand, according to the assurance of a contemporary, as a perpetual reminder of their high estimate of St. Bernardine's preaching.[2]

Devotion to the holy name was, indeed, our saint's favourite topic, and a more and more recurring one, as he came to regard it as the sovereign means of rekindling popular fervour. Thus at Volterra, where he was preaching the Advent of 1424, we find him introducing a practice, destined ere long to give rise to much contest. At the close of his sermon, namely, he would expose a tablet to the veneration of the kneeling multitude whereon he himself had painted the I.H.S. surrounded by rays, exhorting the people to implore God's mercy and to pledge themselves to live in peace, and finally blessing them with the sacred monogram. This tablet, left behind by our saint at his departure, has been preserved by the in-

[1] Vespasiano de Bisticci, *Vite di nomini illustri del secolo XV.* Bernabæus Senensis, in speaking of these sermons, says: "*Ad bonos et laudabiles mores religiosè faciliterque Florentinos reduit.*"

[2] ". . . *Ut testimonium ubique prospectum quam evidentissimè daret, quod predicationes suæ huic devotissimo populo et gratæ et jucundæ fuissent.*" (Bernabæus.)

habitants of Volterra as a most precious relic. Kept in a church dedicated to the holy name, and confided to the care of a special confraternity, it used to be exposed and carried in solemn procession in times of peril and calamity. It is now preserved in one of the chapels of the cathedral.

Many other Tuscan towns were likewise visited by our saint, such as Prato, where we find him preaching during the Lent of 1425. As he was leaving this place after Easter, followed by the entire populace, a bull, so we are told by several of his biographers, terrified at the sight of the multitude, ran furiously forward, wounding a young man so severely that he was left for dead on the ground. Alarmed by the people's cries, however, Bernardine hurried to the spot and, exclaiming with a sigh, "The devil is at this moment striving to undo all the good wrought by God in this place," raised his eyes to heaven and, making the sign of the cross over the prostrate youth, "By the grace of God," he said, "this young man shall receive no injury. Remove him hence." And the youth had scarcely been carried several steps before he arose, as hale and hearty as heretofore.

Meanwhile the civil pride of the Sienese, those privileged contemplators of his youthful fervour, fanned by rumours of their compatriot's renown throughout Italy, induced them to conceive a strong desire to hear Bernardine preach. And it was to gratify this wish that our saint, at the end of the April of 1425, wended his way towards Siena, where he received an

equally hearty welcome at the hands of the people and the municipality.[1] A pulpit and an altar were erected for him on the great square facing the town hall. The tourist will find no difficulty in picturing the scene that ensued, since the surroundings have remained pretty well unchanged down to the present day. The weird but grand medieval aspect of the conch-shaped *Piazza del Campo* surrounded by Gothic palaces cannot fail to strike the traveller's eye. Nor will he gaze without a certain sense of awe on the massive, crenulated towers of the *Palazzo pubblico*, suggestive of a wild tragedy of its own and of the bloody scenes of yore enacted within its walls, while the lofty *torre della Mangia* still soars as boldly and proudly up into the sky as ever it did at the time of which we write, when our saint preached there, after saying Mass, on fifty consecutive days, to a populace that thronged the spacious square and to the town officials conspicuous on their tribune. Among his audience, on one occasion, was a youth as yet unknown to fame, though destined ere long to become illustrious, the brilliant Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II, who was, he assures us, so carried away by the preacher's eloquence, that he was on the point of entering the Minorite Order. Contemporary evidence is, indeed, unanimous on the subject of Bernardine's triumph and in its description of the Sienese as docile to his commands, as reforming their lives, readopting the primitive Christian code of morals and repudiating

[1] "*Senensis viri cunctusque populus lætissima fronte eum receperunt.*" (Bernabæus Senensis.)

the spirit of discord and revolt so inherent in their blood.[1] In consequence of the sermons against gambling, luxury and female coquetry, moreover, a sort of wooden turret was erected on the middle of the square wherein were deposited cards, dice, chessmen, ornaments of toilet and false hair, making a sum total of over four hundred objects, all of which were given to the flames. We are told, too, how the work of completion of the cathedral, begun during the thirteenth century, had come to languish for want of an energetic impulse and how this was promptly afforded by our saint. He was likewise not unmindful of his favourite devotion, since, on Whit-Monday, we read of his exposing the tablet inscribed with the usual monogram and encircled by rays to the gaze of the assembled people all aglow with the fervour kindled by his words, and who, singularly moved at the sight, began to cry out for mercy and to shed abundant tears, seeming, indeed, to be on the very point of swooning away.[2] The hall of the cathedral chapter-house of Siena contains a curious picture by one of Bernardine's contemporaries, Sano di Pietro,[3] representing our saint standing in

[1] "*Animos Senensium omnium ad omnem voluntatem suam reducens ad pristinam et vetustam consuetudinem benè et christianè vivendi eos firmavit. . . . Pacem inter dissidentes componens, cunctum populum pacatum ac tranquillum suavissimâ oratione suâ reddidit.*" (Bernabæus.)

[2] "*. . . e fu tanto lo splendore che dava el Giesù, ch'e misse stupore a oguno, e cominciossi a gridare misericordia con tante lacrime, e per grande devozione pareva che oguno venisse meno.*" (Cronaca Senese, *che va sotto il nome degli Aldobrandini*, MS. in possession of the town library of Siena and quoted by Donati in the *Bulletino Senese di Storia patria*, 1894, p. 54.)

[3] Born in 1406, died in 1481.

a tall pulpit erected in front of the *Palazzo pubblico*, behind him the little altar at which he has said Mass, and in his hands a rectangular tablet inscribed with the I.H.S. The town officials figure in a tribune, while the populace throngs the square beneath, the women with white veils on their heads being severed from the men by bands of cloth, while the whole assembly is on its knees with eyes raised towards the tablet.[1] On Whit-Tuesday an immense procession was organized in which all the inhabitants took part, headed by the town officials, on which occasion the tablet figured among the relics.[2] In order to perpetuate the memory of these solemn events and do homage to the name of Jesus, the heads of the republic decided, moreover, to inscribe the façade of the *Palazzo pubblico*, which, in a moment of patriotic languor, had been disfigured by the arms of the Visconti, with the sacred monogram surrounded by a circle of blue and enhanced by golden rays. The same was likewise ordered to be reproduced in the interior of the building, in the *Sala del Mappamondo*, and both these paintings are still to be seen at the present day.[3] These proceedings, indeed, found so

[1] At Siena there are two other pictures, probably also by Sano di Pietro, one of which, in a hall of the *Palazzo pubblico*, is very similar to that above described, while the other depicts our saint preaching in the square before the church of S. Francesco. Here it is no longer the tablet, but the crucifix, he exhibits to the kneeling crowd, while the men are again barricaded off from the women. Lastly we would draw the reader's attention to a painting in the gallery of the Accademia delle Belle Arti at Siena, wherein Bernardine is represented in the pulpit, a crucifix in his hand, surrounded by a round tablet bearing the sacred monogram.

[2] Probably the very tablet now preserved at Siena, in the chapel of the Confraternity of St. Bernardine.

[3] Milanesi, *Documenti per la storia dell' arte senese*, Vol. II, pp. 128-31.

many imitators that the traveller will still find the sacred letters carved over the stone doorway of many an old house in Siena. Nor was this the only signal mark of deference paid to the preacher, for on 8 June, 1425, were promulgated various decrees for the strict observance of morals, which were headed : *Riformagioni di frate Bernardino.*[1] Some of these laws put a limit to the sum bequeathable as a marriage dowry and to the profusive luxury of weddings so as to facilitate marriages, grown to be too rare, others prohibited the wearing of excessively rich apparel, while some finally aimed at excluding usurers and men accused of gross immorality from the ranks of public life. And a special official, known as *Capitano e exequitore di Giustizia,* was entrusted with the charge of seeing to the execution of these statutes.

Siena was filled with grief as the day for Bernardine's departure drew nigh,[2] and when, at the close of his farewell sermon, he gave the people his parting benediction, all the bells of the town rang out, amid the blast of trumpets. And a huge crowd followed him beyond the city walls, up to the fifth milestone, near the river Arbia, paying him the most profound marks of veneration and parting from him with tears. One of his biographers relates how the saint,

[1] Cf. with these *Riformagioni di frate Bernardino,* Cav. Mengozzi's work : *Il monte dei Paschi, note storiche raccolte e pubblicate per ordine della deputazione ed a cura del presidente conte Niccolo Piccolomini,* Vol. I, p. 111 *et seq.*

[2] The grief of the Sienese at Bernardine's departure is voiced in a *Lamento* composed at that time by the poet Francesco di Giovanni, recently discovered in a MS. of the Sienese library. (Cf. Professor O. Bacci's conference in a volume entitled, *Conferenze della Commissione senese di storia patria,* 1895, p. 134.)

wounded in his humility by such profuse marks of homage, walked in the midst of the crowd in sadness and with a bowed head, as though he were being led to torture.[1] Nor did he regain his habitual cheerfulness until he found himself once more alone in the heart of the country, though still in Sienese territory. Here he remained some time as though anxious to console himself for such dazzling publicity by preaching, as he loved to do, to homely peasants, appropriating his language to their untutored minds.

His missionary tour through Tuscany was brought to a close by a visit to Arezzo, where he is said, by making the sign of the cross, to have miraculously stopped a shower of rain which threatened to interrupt his sermon. Here, besides, he put an end to various superstitious practices connected with a neighbouring wood, close to a fountain once sacred to Apollo, where he caused a statue of the blessed Virgin to be erected, which soon became an object of popular devotion and a place of pilgrimage. Here eventually arose a church, under the invocation of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which subsists down to the present day, its graceful portico planned by Benedetto da Majano arousing the tourist's admiration.

VII

Arezzo lies on the borders of Umbria, that unfertile, somewhat wild poetic land of exquisite lights and shades,

[1] "*Visumque aliquando, dum populi eum discedentum magno cum honore et concursu comitarentur, ita tris tem, dejectum, prostratumque incedere, ac si ad supplicium duceretur.*" (Maphæus Vegius.)

where rugged crests are crowned with little fortified towns that go to make a harmonious outline against the distant horizon. In Bernardine's eyes, moreover, the beauty of the landscape was enhanced by its close association with St. Francis. Thus, in the August of 1425, we find our saint along with an immense concourse of pilgrims celebrating the feast of St. Mary of the Angels in the famous convent of that name founded by the *Poverello* at the foot of the ascent to Assisi. As soon as he had satisfied the promptings of filial piety in this way, however, he tarried no longer, but at once returned to his missionary labours.

Judging by contemporary evidence, the warfare which had for many years already been devastating the papal states had created great havoc in Umbria, robbing a people formerly inclined to be devout of well-nigh all interest in spiritual things, of practically every sentiment of faith, piety and justice.[1] Bernardine began his labours at Perugia, a veritable city of confusion, where, under the constant stress of civil war, the people had grown so savage as to have earned for themselves a name for ferocity.[2] Our saint, who was stopping at a convent of the Observance close to the city walls, went every morning to preach in the market-place, where the people flocked in crowds to hear him. And yet he was conscious of not having so far touched their hearts. He therefore hit

[1] "... *præcipuè cum præterita bella eam regionem quasi totam vastassent; quare in rebus de Deo, de religione, de justitia, de fide, tales homines nihil seu parum sentiebant.*" (Bernabæus.)

[2] "... *feri propter bellum intestinum ac civile habentur.*"

upon the singular device of announcing his intention of introducing his hearers to the devil, which, by exciting the people's curiosity, had the effect of visibly swelling the number of his audience. Whereupon, after several days of anxious expectation on the part of the crowd, he said: "I will keep my word to you, and not only one devil, but several will I show you," and, to the amazement of the throng held in breathless suspense: "Gaze at one another," he suddenly exclaimed, "and you will be looking on devils; for are not you, in very truth, devils, you who do the work of Satan?" Then, in earnest tones, to obviate the possibility of any flippant interpretation, he went on to draw a severe as well as pathetic picture of the vices raging in the city, while conjuring his listeners to renounce the works of Satan. And his fervent exhortation at last met with a favourable ear and was followed by a complete conversion. Peace was publicly proclaimed, the most inveterate hatred was subdued at the sight of so general a reconciliation, while several of those who formerly considered themselves bound to vengeance now hastened to seek out their adversary, and to beg his pardon, in several instances with a halter round their neck. Moreover, the piety, which had seemed extinct, revived, and led to the various artifices of feminine coquetry, in the shape of false hair, scents, wreaths, high-heeled shoes, mirrors and "other abominations" being piled into a heap on the market-place, two tall turrets flying the satanic colours being erected thereon, and the whole being given

over to the flames. We are told on this occasion of a particular woman who hesitated to part with a fine lock of hair kept stored away in a chest. But no sooner did she open the box than the hair sprang out of its own accord, striking her such a blow in the face that, pale with pain and terror, she hastened to fling her treasure into the fire along with her other things. Everywhere the name of Jesus was carved on the walls of the houses, while vigorous legal measures were adopted to punish usury and gross immorality, as well as to put a stop to the dances enacted in church on certain feast-days. Moreover the games usually held at spring-tide, and at which the historic and barbarous usage still prevailed of affording the company the spectacle of a band of armed youths stoning one another so fiercely that death often ensued, were prohibited under the severest penalties, while the weapons used for the purpose were destroyed. And it is of significance that, in the preamble to these statutes, all of which are entitled *Statuta S. Bernardini*, it is expressly mentioned that their enaction is due to a desire for external conformity with the preacher's maxims: "*Inhærendo doctrinæ fratris Bernardini de Senis, Ordinis Minorum.*"[1]

What a long-cherished recollection must so signal a conversion have been to him! No wonder that, when preaching two years later to the Sienese, he holds up Perugia

[1] Cf. *Miscellanea francescana* (Foligno), Vol. IV, p. 147, *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* L. Banchi, Vol. I, p. 350, notes 1 and 2, and Bonazzi's *Storia di Perugia*, p. 653.

before them as a shining light, recalling how that city from being one of the most infamous had suddenly become one of the best-regulated of towns, dwelling on that suppression of discord, on that persistent state of peace, on that frequentation of the churches, and in particular of confession, "so that it was a positive wonder," and exclaiming: "Nowhere else have I beheld the like results . . . . Of all cities, this is the one most after my own heart, for there is none purer." Whereupon, turning to his compatriots, "there is," quoth he, "as great a contrast between you and the inhabitants of Perugia, as there is between heaven and earth."[1]

But, though Perugia was thus momentarily transformed, it was by no means proof against relapse, so that several years later, discord having again broken out, we find Bernardine once more hurrying thither, and saying on mounting the pulpit: "God, having beheld your dissensions which He abominates, has sent me to you as His messenger to proclaim peace to men of good will." After preaching four sermons with a view to re-establishing concord, he wound up his last address as follows: "Let all men of good will who are desirous of dwelling in peace with their neighbour, place themselves on my right, those who will not obey my voice, on my left." Then the whole multitude rose and went to his right with the exception of a youth of a noble and powerful family who, with his attendants, remained standing

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, edite da* L. Banchi, Vol. I, pp. 97, 349-50; Vol. II, p. 411; Vol. III, p. 497.

at the preacher's left, murmuring against Bernardine, who thus accosted him: "So, there you stand in solitary grandeur, contemning in obstinate pride the admonitions which I, at God's command, have addressed to this people. I conjure you once more, in the name of God, to forgive others from the bottom of your heart whatever injuries they may have inflicted on you or your family and to pass over to my right. And, if you refuse, know for certain that you shall not re-enter your home alive." The young man, however, laughed the saint's menace to scorn and remained obdurate in his refusal. But hardly had he reached his door before he was seized with a sudden illness and died without being able to receive the sacraments.

On leaving Perugia, at the close of 1425, Bernardine employed the whole of the year 1426 in preaching not only to the towns but even to the villages of Umbria, so that by the beginning of the year 1427, he was already moving further south and Romewards. Thus, from 1st January to 16th February, we find him at Orvieto, and passing thence to Viterbo. Nor was his preaching at any one of these places unattended by success. His main topic seems to have been the practice of usury in vogue in that part, and which he attacks with the greatest vehemence, urging the executive everywhere to take stringent steps against all such as were addicted to this business, of whom the majority were Jews.[1] This campaign against usurers, "those sellers

[1] A comic incident throwing light upon Bernardine's attitude towards usurers is reported in an old chronicle. While preaching at Milan, he was often visited by a merchant who urged our saint to inveigh so strenuously against usury as to render it obnoxious in the eyes of all. On making inquiries, however, the

of tears," as they were styled by Bernardine of Feltre, one of our saint's disciples, was indeed destined to occupy the attention of the Minorite Order for many years to come; and the friars it was who, in the teeth of the violent and often powerful opposition of those anxious to uphold their illicit trade, succeeded in establishing and propagating pawnbrokeries during the second half of the fifteenth century, which, instituted for the purpose of granting gratuitous loans, were originally maintained solely by the generosity of wealthy patrons.

A material proof of the popularity of our saint's preaching in all these districts is afforded by the recurrence of the sacred monogram on the public edifices of several of these places, affording us a clue to his missionary journeys, while further testimony to the same effect may be gleaned from the dusty pages of numberless city archives, gradually to be explored by modern scholarship. Such a work has, in fact, been already partially undertaken at Gubbio,[1] Viterbo,[2] and Orvieto.[3] The discovered documents, however, only confirm the already noted fact of the moral obligation devolving on the executive of seconding the preacher's work of reform. Thus, among the records of the General Council of Orvieto,

latter ascertained his visitor to be himself the greatest usurer of the place, whose action in this matter was prompted by a wish to lessen the number of his competitors by inspiring them with a wholesome horror of the trade. (Lud. Domenichi, *Facezie*, Ch. VI, quoted by F. Donati, *Bulletino Senese di storia patria*, 1894, p. 53.)

[1] *Miscellanea francescana* (Foligno) Vol. IV, p. 150.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 35.

[3] *San Bernardino da Siena in Orvieto e in Porano*, by L. Fumi (Siena, 1888).

we find an account of two noteworthy conferences. At the first of these, which occurred on 12 January, 1427, the Council, after enlarging on the fact that Friar Bernardine, *predicator desideratus*, had come to preach the word of God, together with five other members of his order, and that they were entirely dependent upon alms for their daily bread, declares that it were impossible, short of the basest ingratitude, to refuse to minister to their daily wants, and charges the officials, with the help of six citizens chosen expressly for the purpose, to supply the friars with the necessaries of life at the public expense. At the other meeting held on 16 February, and at which seventeen members were present, mention is made of "the venerable Father, Friar Bernardine," who, in the course of one of his sermons, had, among other injunctions, insisted on the duty of abstaining from blasphemy and from games of hazard, of observing the feast-days and of suppressing usury, facilitated by the concessions formerly granted to the Jews. Since, moreover, in his last sermon, delivered on that very day, the preacher had implored the General Council to adopt measures of reform as regards these vices, the Council hereby charges a committee to draw up the decrees demanded by him and which are from henceforth to obtain force of law.

Thus did Bernardine traverse the length and breadth of Italy, attracting crowds of listeners and transforming the hearts of men. Some idea of the veneration and esteem in which he was universally held may be gathered from the fact of his contemporaries likening his reception to that of

St. Paul and regarding his words as "an oracle divine." Ambrogio Traversari, a Camaldolese of great piety and learning, and one of the greatest Humanists of the day, speaks in a letter to a friend of that "undying stream of divine eloquence issuing from the sweet and bounteous lips of that man of God, Friar Bernardine."[1] But, at the moment when his fame seemed to have reached its zenith, suddenly and without forewarning there arose a storm which for a time threatened to engulf it. At Viterbo, namely, where he was as successful as ever, preaching the Lent in 1427, he received the papal summons to repair immediately to Rome to defend himself against the charge of heresy.

[1] *Ambrosii Traversarii Epistolæ et Orationes*, Florence, 1759, Lib. II, p. 41.

CHAPTER III

THE TIME OF TRIAL

I. Bernardine is accused of heresy on account of his devotion to the name of Jesus. Chilling reception on the part of Martin V. Calm attitude of the accused. John of Capistrano comes to the rescue. Debate in presence of the Pope. Bernardine comes out victorious. He preaches in Rome. The tide is once more turned in his favour. His refusal of the bishopric of Siena.

II. He revisits Siena and the surrounding districts. Bernardine's open censure of Philip Maria Visconti. He induces the Sienese to desist from war. His humility in the midst of success.

III. Unabated fury of the saint's adversaries, who renew their accusations against him at the accession of Pope Eugenius IV. Legal proceedings resorted to in Rome without the Pope's knowledge. Eugenius IV cancels the whole procedure and bestows a eulogy on St. Bernardine.

IV. Extent of propagation of the devotion to the holy name during Bernardine's lifetime and after his death. He is the universally acknowledged founder of this cultus.

V. Bernardine's relations with the Emperor Sigismund. He accompanies that prince to Rome at the time of his coronation.

I

WHILE the devotion to the name of Jesus was, under Bernardine's impulse, spreading far and wide, several practices connected with the same, especially that of venerating tablets inscribed with the sacred monogram, were provoking censure in certain quarters as tending towards idolatry and superstition. The people, it was objected, would doubtless soon come to regard the tablet in the light of a charm, and would end by making it an object of adora-

tion.[1] It is true Bernardine's own teaching excluded the possibility of any such misinterpretation, and we find him constantly on the alert to warn his followers against any such perversion of his doctrine by admonishing them that, "as they adored Jesus in the flesh, so they should also worship the name of Jesus, not the colour nor the carved letters, but as it were the Saviour, not the symbol, but the reality, since the name of Jesus was intended to recall to their minds the Saviour, Redeemer and Son of God."[2] Such formal declarations were, however, far from disarming the antagonism of his opponents, and it must, we think, be admitted that the zeal of some of Bernardine's Minorite followers occasionally tended to overstep discretion. At any rate certain processions were alleged to have taken place under their auspices, in which the tablet had been accorded pre-eminence over the crucifix itself.

Foremost amongst Bernardine's opponents were the adherents of Manfred, the Dominican friar, whose doctrine on Antichrist had been combated by our saint and whose following therefore naturally welcomed so favourable an opportunity of avenging their master.

And a certain number of Dominicans had likewise been won over to their cause. Although it is doubtless an exaggeration to dwell exclusively on the antagonism occa-

[1] St. Antony, recalling these facts some years later, remarks: "*Hoc etsi simplicibus videretur devotionem afferre, sapientes arbitrabantur idolatriam vel saltem ad superstitionem tendere.*"

[2] Words quoted by Amedeo, of Venice, one of the saint's biographers.

sionally existing between the two great mendicant orders, while both remained at bottom true to the bond of friendship uniting the two founders and commemorated in the loving embrace of the two saints depicted by Fra Angelico on the wall of the convent of San Marco; although the tender feeling of St. Bonaventure for St. Thomas Aquinas and the story of the welcome accorded St. Bernardine by St. Vincent Ferrer, when the white-haired old man joyfully foretold the young one's coming glory, are worthy sequels to that fraternal kiss of peace; yet, in spite of all this, there is also a less favourable side to the picture, showing us how the legitimate diversity and salutary emulation subsisting between the two orders was, in the case of less generous and saintly souls, occasionally apt to degenerate into a somewhat invidious rivalry. Thus, in the fiery theological debates constantly recurring during the Middle Ages, we not infrequently find the Minorites on the one side, the Dominicans on the other. This had indeed already occurred at the beginning of the fourteenth century, on occasion of a controversy regarding the poverty of Christ and His apostles, which had wrought havoc in many minds, laying the seeds of discord in the Papacy itself; and again at the close of that century, in the dispute regarding the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, advocated by the Franciscans and contested by the Dominicans; while a similar dissension persisted between the two orders, during the latter half of the fifteenth century, on the subtle and at best idle question as to whether the blood shed by

Christ during His passion still continued, despite its separation from the body, to merit divine honours—a controversy eliciting such a storm of passion that it could be allayed only by the Pope's emphatic prohibition to either party to qualify the other as heretical. Thus, in the case of the polemical discussion to which the new devotion gave rise, it is by no means surprising to find the Dominicans siding against the Franciscans, not because, contrary to all the traditions of an order which, in the thirteenth century, had been mainly instrumental in propagating this devotion,[1] they went so far as to blame the veneration of the holy name, but merely because they considered that Bernardine and his followers countenanced various pernicious and heterodox practices under that head.

And this view of the case was shared by one Andrew Biglio, a celebrated and learned member of the order of Hermits of St. Augustine, who, as the author of an *Admonitio* addressed to this very Manfred, was certainly above all suspicion of being actuated by a desire to avenge him. Other motives must, therefore, have prompted the treatise entitled, *De institutis, discipulis ac doctrinâ fratris Bernardini, Ord. Minorum*, wherein, while professing his admiration for Bernardine's eloquence and sanctity, he censures his mode of preaching and accuses him and his followers of being "disseminators of scandal and superstition."[2]

[1] See *La guerre de Centans, Jeanne d'Arc et les Dominicains*, by the Rev. Father Chapotin, p. 167.

[2] This pamphlet is mentioned by Muratori, without any attempt to precisionize its date. (See *Rerum Italicarum scriptores præcipui*, Vol. XIX, p. 4.) Biglio, who later on became provincial of the Augustinians at Siena, and who

Even this severe imputation, however, failed to appease the wrath of Manfred's partisans, who finally, under plea of Bernardine's sermons containing propositions contrary to faith, and relying on more or less trustworthy evidence as to his mode of life, proceeded to draw up a deed of accusation against him, addressed to the Pope, Martin V, who, dexterously misled by Bernardine's opponents into regarding the alleged facts as of grave significance, at once, without further inquiry, cited the accused to appear before him.

On 8th November, 1417, Cardinal Otto Colonna had been proclaimed pope at Constance, under the name of Martin V, and his election was welcomed with joy throughout Christendom, as putting an end to the Great Schism. Of noble Roman birth, he was a man of elevated principles, of spotless life, as well as of wide learning, and known besides for a prudent and resolute politician. Finding, on his accession, the temporal and spiritual authority of the Papacy equally imperilled, he made their solidification his main endeavour, and displayed singular administrative and diplomatic ability in his repression of anarchy, in putting an end to foreign usurpation of the papal states, as also in defence of the papal prerogative against

died there in 1435, seems to have finally overcome his prejudice against our saint. In fact, in the municipal library at Siena, there is a letter of his addressed to Bernardine, wherein, after giving free vent to his admiration of the sermons to the Sienese, he gives expression to his veneration for our saint and ends by assuring him that there is nothing he values more than his esteem. (*Notizie su S. Bernardino*, published by F. Donati, in the *Bulletino senese di storia patria*, 1894, p. 57.)

the arrogant exactions of a council or of an ambitious sovereign. But, with his mind concentrated on this two-fold task, he had, unfortunately, come to overlook the crying need of ecclesiastical reform, then in such universal demand, and the humble Franciscan, all absorbed in his missionary life, had hitherto escaped his attention, which of itself accounts for the ready credence he at first attached to the tales of Bernardine's adversaries.

Bernardine, meanwhile, no sooner received the papal summons than, suspending his course of sermons, he set out in prompt obedience on his journey to Rome, accompanied by a number of the inhabitants of Viterbo, eager thus publicly to proclaim their faith in his teaching.[1] On his arrival in Rome, he prostrated himself at the feet of the Pope, who received him with marked coldness, declaring that, if matters stood as they had been reported, he fully deserved the penalties reserved for temerarious ecclesiastics and propagators of heresy. He forbade him, moreover, to preach, to expose the tablets, or to leave the city ere his conduct should have been subjected to a severe inquiry. His sermons and writings were thereupon handed over to be examined by a commission composed mostly of Dominicans and of Hermits of St. Augustine, while a day was fixed on which the accused was to be confronted with his accusers.

Thus suddenly bereft of the support of public opinion, Bernardine found himself regarded with suspicion, and even

[1] ". . . *frequentissimo, ob reverentium doctrinæ, populo insequente.*" (Wadding.)

pointed at in the streets of Rome as "the heretic," whilst his adversaries, already confident of success, began openly to exult in their triumph. Nay, matters soon reached such a pass that persons found to be possessed of tablets inscribed with the holy name were, in several places, refused absolution, while the Minorities were hooted as they went on their wonted begging-rounds with shouts of: "*Foràs Jesu!*" (Away with Jesus!). Even many of Bernardine's former disciples now turned against him, while others, though remaining at bottom true to their master, were yet sorely troubled and perplexed. This was the case with the celebrated Humanist Ambrogio Traversari of Florence, who actually sought to dissuade Albert of Sarteano from preaching in Florence, where he had hoped to turn the tide in Bernardine's favour, by dwelling on the manifold difficulties of the task in view of the convulsed state of public opinion, while the great doctor sought to appease his own trouble and perplexity of mind by recalling the similar persecutions meted out to the apostles.[1]

Strange to say, Bernardine himself was by far the calmest member of the persecuted group, portraying no symptom of anger, impatience or animosity in his attitude towards his opponents. To such as ventured to express their surprise at his composure, he replied: "Let us leave everything in God's hands," adding, that "such per-

[1] Ambrosii Traversarii, *Epistolæ et Orationes* (Florence, 1759), Lib. II, 40. The epistle here alluded to bears no date.

secution was very profitable to his soul, which would otherwise have incurred great danger." On one particular occasion, after having been grossly insulted, his friends, to their astonishment, beholding him repair to his cell for work, asked him "how he could possibly at such a time apply himself to study necessitating composure of mind." Whereupon the saint replied: "As soon as I enter my cell, I leave all the insults and affronts I have received outside the door, nor does the thought of them ever recur to trouble or molest me." With similar serenity we find him, not many months later, exclaiming in the course of a sermon to the Sienese: "I swear to you, there is not one of those who have in any way insulted me during the twenty-five years of my religious life whose feet I would not willingly kiss, and more."[1]

The Minorites of the Observance, meanwhile, became alive to the danger threatening the most illustrious member of their order. And several of their number set out for Rome to his assistance, among them John of Capistrano, a distinguished preacher and future saint, who, though Bernardine's junior by only five months, had constituted himself the latter's disciple and pupil in theology. In the year 1417, after some experience of life in the world, he had entered religion, and was preaching in Naples when the news of the accusations against his master reached his ears. To one of his ardent, chivalrous temperament, there appeared but one course to pursue, and, forgetting all else

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. III, p. 11.

in the overmastering desire to stand by Bernardine in a time of need, we find him hastening to Aquila to fetch his books and papers, and thereupon setting out with all speed for Rome, armed with a tablet on which figured the holy name surrounded by rays of gold. And it so chanced that he arrived there with an appreciable number of friends, on the very day fixed for the hearing of the case. On entering the gates of the Eternal City, in probable ignorance of the papal prohibition, he ordered the tablet to be raised on a pike and carried before him as a standard; and in this way he advanced through the streets of Rome, surrounded by a swelling concourse of people who, won over and carried away by Capistrano's fervour, joined loudly with him in chanting the praises of the holy name. At last they reached the gates of the Vatican in triumph, when the Pope, struck by the spectacle of so vast a crowd and by the fervour they displayed, deemed it advisable to defer the sitting to a later date, John of Capistrano being granted permission to plead in the defence.

At last the day arrived on which the trial was appointed to take place. It was conducted in the basilica of St. Peter's, in presence of the Pope. The impeachment, conducted chiefly by Dominicans, proved a vehement and a subtle piece of argument,[1] to which Bernardine and John of Capistrano replied. Though, unfortunately, none

[1] "*Adversarii et æmuli sui, maximâ cum pompâ et implicatis syllogismis, in eum sanctum virum impetum effrænatum fecere. O Deus immortalis, qualis fuit morsus eorum!*" (Bernabæus.)

of these allocutions have been handed down to us, yet this much we know, that not only did they succeed in completely disarming the Pope's suspicions, and in once for all convincing him of the fact that neither the sermons nor the writings of the accused were in the slightest degree reprehensible, but they even led him to suspect the integrity of the motives prompting so futile an accusation. At any rate, he invited Bernardine to appear the next day before him, when, blessing him with great effusion, he restored to him full liberty to preach and to display the "most sweet name of Jesus," and actually urged him to preach in the Vatican basilica itself. He also ordered prayers to be recited in solemn reparation, and a great procession of all the clergy to take place in honour of the name of Jesus. And from this day may be dated the universality of the cultus in Italy, since henceforward we constantly meet with the holy name carved over the entrance of private dwellings and churches.[1]

[1] To the erudite pen of Signor F. Donati of Siena is owing a review which appeared in the *Bulletino senese di storia patria* in 1894, and which contended that the Pope, while giving the case, as regards Bernardine's doctrine of the holy name, in the friar's favour, had nevertheless persisted in his refusal to sanction the exposition of the tablets. Signor Donati's arguments in support of this theory, however, appear to us inconclusive when confronted with the weighty contrary evidence afforded by documents of the period, all of which affirm Bernardine's complete triumph. Our saint's subsequent tone and conduct, moreover, as well as the popular veneration paid to these same tablets by many successive generations, would go far to prove the existence of a wholesale retractation of the former papal veto. The fact is that the papal decision seems to have given rise to a conscious or involuntary equivocation on the part of Bernardine's adversaries, ready as they were to credit the rumour of a censure

For eighty consecutive days St. Bernardine now preached in Rome, both at St. Peter's and elsewhere; nay, he himself estimated at no less than one hundred and fourteen the number of sermons he delivered within the Eternal City.[1] The Pope himself, as well as the Sacred College, honoured him on several occasions with their presence. And as for the people at large, no sooner did they grow habituated to the preacher's idiosyncrasies, and especially to his colloquial vivacity of manner, than his popularity was secured, and it soon became no exaggeration for Æneas Sylvius to declare that "he was universally regarded as great and admirable."[2] Nay, so omnipotent was Bernardine, that at his word hatred melted into brotherly love.[3] As at Perugia, so now in Rome, he continued to attack the various barbarous usages prevailing as the outcome of civil discord, and particularly that according to which a man convicted of the murder of one of the opposite party had but to secure the entrance to his house with iron bars in order to be rendered proof, as long as he remained within doors, against any reprisal, while, on the other hand, it was open to his victim's partisans to attack him with an armed force, a practice in-

pronounced on any of his practices. A confusion may besides have arisen between the first papal decision given immediately on Bernardine's arrival and prior to the adoption of any legal measures against him, and which certainly did prohibit the exposition of the tablets, and the final sentence given at the close of the debate, which seems to have gone entirely in the friar's favour.

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari, edite da* L. Banchi, Vol. II, p. 420.

[2] "*Magnus et mirabilis apud omnes habebatur.*"

[3] In preaching shortly afterwards to the Sienese, our saint cites the example of the Romans who, at his request, had collected enough money to liberate thirty prisoners. (*Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 59.)

volving an inevitable renewal of bloodshed, and one which our saint succeeded in abolishing. Numerous miracles were meanwhile adding to his fame. But among the numerous instances of bodily cures quoted by contemporary biographers, we would confine our attention to the following. Bernardine's health having been gravely impaired in consequence of so much fatigue and self-denial, a pious dame conceived the idea of procuring him some fortifying delicacies in the way of food. But when they were offered him, the saint refused to touch them, saying: "I have no need of these good things, but go into the street where you will find a man who is seriously ill, and give them to him with these words: 'Friar Bernardine sends you these victuals in order that you may accept them in the name of Jesus, and may be cured.'" And lo, scarcely had the sick man done as he was bid, than he arose completely restored to health.

St. Bernardine was daily growing more and more popular in Rome. The tide had certainly changed in his favour with such amazing rapidity, that those very Romans who but a little time ago had shunned him as though he were a convicted heretic, now vied with one another in paying him homage. The news of his rehabilitation, moreover, which had rapidly spread throughout Italy, not only served to reinstate him in public opinion, but also to enhance the renown of his sanctity.[1] Following in the footsteps of

[1] "*Credit ubique, tuum erga sacratissimum nomen, tuum erga sanctissimum præconem, veneratio.*" (Wadding.) "*Credit deinde suæ bonitatis sanctitatisque fama clarissima quasi totum per orbem.* (Bernabæus.)

the Romans, the Florentines likewise caused solemn prayers to be recited and a huge stone magnificently inscribed with the holy name to be erected on the square of Santa Croce, where it might still be seen after the lapse of two centuries. Traversari, formerly so gloomy and dejected, now writes to a Roman friend of his to express his joy at the news of Bernardine's present favour with the papal court and the whole Roman people, formerly so incensed against him, praising God for the great benefits accruing therefrom to the country at large, and asserting his belief in the miraculous nature of so marvellous a change. He ends by begging his correspondent, for the love of Friar Bernardine, to furnish him with more details concerning the confusion of the opposite party, declaring how glad he should have been personally to witness "the victorious triumph of the Lord Jesus wrought by the instrument of Brother Bernardine, that good, true, holy and upright man of God."[1] When, soon afterwards, preaching in Siena, our saint took occasion to refer with his habitual wit and good humour to the severe trials he had endured in Rome: "On my arrival," he says, "some wanted to see me fried, others roasted, but once they had heard me preach, not a man was suffered to say a word against me. When I come to consider such treatment, I marvel and say to myself: Hold fast to God, for fleeting indeed are the things of this world, since they now wish me well whose death they desired but a short time previously."[2]

[1] Ambrosii Traversarii, *Epistolæ et Orationes*, Lib. II, 41.
[2] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 98.

So great was the general esteem in which our saint was held, that every form of distinction might have been his had he so willed it, nay, while he was busy preaching in Rome a deputation had already started from Siena to demand his nomination to the episcopal see of that town. The Pope had already approved the election, before communicating the news to Bernardine. But the latter without the smallest hesitation refused the offer, with the words, "God has not sent me to baptize, but to preach, and I deem it a greater thing to carry the gospel to the world at large than to confine my labours within the narrow limits of a single diocese. As for the pomp and glory of the episcopate, I renounce the same and would rather suffer want with the poor than be honoured along with opulent prelates. Nor do I consider myself equal to the discharge of such manifold duties, while in the humble state which with God's help I have chosen I am better able to keep to what I have promised."

So high indeed was his estimate of the privilege of the task entrusted to him, that of carrying the word of God to distant parts, that he jocosely remarks, "They would do me an injury who, for the sake of becoming chief of a single city, would have me desert a post which ensures to me the honour of being regarded as chief wherever I go." And a few months later we find him saying to the Sienese: "If I had returned to you as you wished, namely as your bishop, my mouth would have been half closed, thus!" (making as though he would shut his

mouth) "and I should have been able to speak to you only with a closed mouth. Therefore have I wished to come to you as I stand, in order that I might speak to you with an open mouth, telling you what I want in my own language and earnestly admonishing you with regard to your sins."[1] Truthfully might he have said with Maillard, the celebrated Franciscan preacher who flourished at the close of the fifteenth century, "*Nihil habeo nisi linguam*": "I have naught but my tongue."

While acting contrary to the wishes of many of his adherents in refusing the episcopate, he, at all events, completely coincided therein with the great Traversari's views on the subject, who had written with tears in his eyes entreating the friar to reject an office that seemed to him so little in keeping with a preacher of poverty; nay, he added that he would rather see him dead than hampered by so wretched a dignity, *infelicissimam dignitatem*, which would be the cause of bringing discredit on his whole order and of rejoicing the hearts of his bitter enemies.[2] Bernardine, however, needed none to teach him a profound contempt for honours; in a characteristically jocular manner, indeed, he was constantly striving to inculcate the like principles into others. Thus it happened one day that, in course of conversation with an illiterate friar whom he esteemed for his great simplicity, Bernardine said, "Brother, I have a great piece of news for you; the Sienese have unanimously

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, pp. 69, 70.
[2] *Traversarii Epist.*, XXXIX.

elected me bishop. Do you not rejoice thereat?" "Oh, father," replied the unsuspecting friar, "do not go and throw away all you have gained by preaching to the multitudes in return for so frail and fleeting a dignity." "How then? if my devoted followers the Milanese were to appoint me their archbishop, would you likewise want me to refuse?" "Why, certainly, since the greater the honour, the more it is to be despised, unless you intend to bring shame upon yourself and all those who, following in your footsteps, proclaim the holy word of God." "But supposing the Pope were to name me patriarch, should I do well still to persist in my refusal?" "Alas! how tainted must your mind be with worldly vanity," exclaimed the disconsolate friar, "for you to be willing on this account to forfeit not only the love of the people purchased at the price of such immense labour, but even the very grace of God!" "But," rejoined our saint, "were I to be named cardinal should I be bound likewise to contemn that dignity?" Whereupon, dazzled at the very thought of so exalted a dignity, the friar replied: "In that case I deem it would be wrong to refuse any longer, for who among us is not smitten by the mere thought of such an exalted station? Loosen your girdle, therefore, father, and accept." Bernardine, however, judging it high time to put an end to this farce, began severely to reprehend his companion, reminding him that so much the higher, so much the more perilous the dignity, and "as for myself," he added, "I am determined not only to reject the episcopate, the patriarchate and the cardinalate,

but even the papacy itself, and I hold myself to be far richer and happier leading the poor and humble life of St. Francis than I could possibly be if raised to the most exalted station imaginable."[1]

II

Already during his stay in Rome Bernardine had received the most pressing invitations to return to Siena, where the turmoils and factionary discords he had appeased in 1425 had been once more revived. Before revisiting Siena, however, he was anxious to see the question of his episcopal election finally dismissed lest, seeing him on the spot, it should occur to his fellow-citizens to put pressure upon him. Owing to this delay, therefore, he did not arrive in Siena until the 14th August, 1427; and the very next day he set to work, preaching from a pulpit erected in the *Piazza del Campo* on forty-five consecutive days.[2] He was not one to minimize the gravity of the reports which had reached his ears, nor were his words prompted by a wish to spare the feelings of his fellow-citizens. "Because of the love I bear you," he says, "everything I heard to your discredit was a blow to me: *m' era una bombarda.*" Bitterly he

[1] Maphæus Vegius.

[2] A sort of précis of these forty-five sermons was discovered and gradually published between the years 1884 and 1888, under the title, *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino da Siena, dette nella Piazza del Campo, l'anno* MCCCCXXVII; *ora primamente, edite da* Luciano Banchi (3 vols). We have already referred to this interesting publication, and shall have occasion to do so hereafter in still greater detail.

reproached them for having given fresh proof of their wonted instability by relapsing into the evil ways of which he hoped to have cured them, declaring theirs an unexampled piece of inconstancy in all his missionary experience, and yet showing his longing, notwithstanding, to come to their assistance, for "if I do good to others," he exclaims, "am I not doubly bound to help my own fellow-citizens?"[1] Hence the vigilant tenderness in their regard that underlay all his efforts at reform and which proved once more conducive, as it had already done two years previously, to the adoption of more stringent measures on the part of the municipality.[2]

During the four years which follow, from 1427 to 1431, St. Bernardine continued his missionary tours through Tuscany, Lombardy, Romagna, and the Marches of Ancona, preaching the gospel indiscriminately in large towns and small villages, singling out as more especially adapted to his labours seats of either war, famine, or pestilence, or the parts where Christianity had become most relaxed. To

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 69, 282, 284.

[2] See a pamphlet entitled, *Sopra un codice cartaceo del secolo XV, osservazioni critiche*, dell' Ab. Luigi de Angelis (Colle, 1820). Bernardine's influence on Sienese administration was by no means transitory. Thus it was evidently he who, in 1839, while at the convent of Capriola, instigated the promulgation of fresh decrees for the suppression of civil discord, in virtue of which the use of all such common Christian names as *Chiassa* and *Graffio* was forbidden, "*perchè suonano parzialità e divisione*," and the bearers of such names were sentenced to be brought before the municipal council and to be prohibited, during the space of three years, from entering the palace of the *Magnifici Signori* under penalty of the payment of a fine of a hundred lire. (*Spoglio delle deliberazioni del Consiglio della Campana.*)

attempt a chronological classification of these missionary journeys were indeed a futile and thankless task, since the contemporary biographies, with their utter disregard for chronological accuracy, confine their efforts to narrating all the good wrought by our saint and to describing the marvellous way in which he managed to win over "persons who in matters of piety and religion were as hard as stone."[1]

Sometimes he would be called upon to address a crowd to whom he was a complete stranger, while at other times we find him revisiting his former scenes of action. There were, besides, several places particularly endeared to him, Milan among the number, which was inseparably linked with the memory of his first missionary tour, in the year 1417, and which ever after displayed singular appreciation of his sermons.[2]

And, despite his impiety and immorality, Philip Maria Visconti rejoiced in the privilege thus accorded to his people, just as, unlettered though he was, he deemed it a wise and honourable thing to maintain the Humanist Filelfo at his court. Not but that his arrogant despotism occasionally collided with the friar's fearless intrepidity, for we read how on the occasion of one of his visits to Siena (the date of which is not precisely known) our saint protested, in pres-

[1] In order to judge of the effect produced by the sermons delivered at Forli from 29 March to 2 July, 1431, we would refer the reader to the contemporary chronicle composed by one of the inhabitants of that town. (*Miscellanea francescana*, Vol. V, p. 33, 34.)

[2] "*Mediolanum ingressus, cujus memoria ex animo minime deleri poterat, revisebat.*" (Maphæus Vegius.) "*Ita gratè illum Mediolanensis populus audiebat ut nullum alium majori aviditate unquam audiverint.*" (Bernabæus.)

ence of the Duke, against the latter's exaction of well-nigh divine homage to be paid to his decrees, warning the people against this species of idolatry, and exhorting them to withhold from man's fleeting glory the passive allegiance due to God alone. In his fury hereat, the Duke threatened, so long as Bernardine persisted in this strain, to withdraw his licence to preach; nay, he even went so far as to threaten him with the infliction of bodily torture. The dauntless friar, however, making light of the Prince's menace, openly reported it in his next sermon, imploring the people not to rise in his defence, since he was only too ready to suffer for truth; thereupon, recurring to his former theme, he renewed his censure of the blasphemous custom about to be enforced.[1] Intimidated by such stubborn resolution, the Duke henceforth abandoned the idea of violence, and resorted to cunning in its stead. Wherefore, on the advice of one of his courtiers, he determined to bestow a vast sum of money on the obnoxious preacher for his own personal use, intending, as soon as he had accepted the money, to denounce him as one devoid in practice of the poverty he preached. Bernardine, however, refused the money, which entailed the immediate dispatch of another messenger to implore him to at least accept the same for the benefit of the community at large

[1] Such firmness and intrepidity were by no means unique among the preachers of the day. Thus the French Franciscan Maillard, who had enraged Louis XI by his freedom of speech, was threatened by the king to be sewn into a bag and hurled into the river. The friar, however, in reply to the king's messenger, said to him, alluding to the recent establishment of the postal system: "Go and tell thy master that I shall get to heaven quicker by water than he will by post."

and for the construction of a new monastery. The offer was, however, once more rejected, to the utter dismay of the Duke's envoys, who asked Bernardine "what on earth they should do with this sum of money, which they had orders on no account to bring back to their master." "In that case," replied the saint, "follow me"; and leading them to the debtors' prison, he paid the prisoners' debts, and gave them back their liberty. Only two remained whose debts the given sum did not suffice to cover, but Bernardine, in compassion for their sad plight, comforted them, saying, "Do not be disheartened, for I promise to do my utmost to procure your liberation, and, should I not succeed, I will myself go to prison in your stead." No sooner, however, did the people hear of what had occurred, than they immediately set to work to make a collection for the purpose, and so quickly furnished the required sum. Meanwhile the Duke, seeing that his gold did not reappear, began to triumph over the friar, declaring to his courtiers that "although the friar talked as though he made light of money, his practice tallied not with his precepts." On the messenger's return, however, he was forced to admit the calumny of his accusation, and, free from all suspicion and resentment, we find him henceforth loud in St. Bernardine's praises.

Though capable, as we have just seen, of opposing the unjust claims of those in authority, the saint was not one to assume the part of political agitator, in which more than one medieval preacher had found his delight. Though

whenever he considered it his duty (as he did more than once) to recall those in power to the sense of their responsibility he did so with great frankness and simplicity, and in defiance of all promptings of human respect, yet never does he figure otherwise than as a Christian moralist, for whom the domain of politics was as foreign as that of party strife.[1] Maphæus Vegius we find praising the reserve he always maintained when speaking of those in authority, so as to avoid at all costs any risk of fomenting the discords and scandals he everywhere sought to allay. "A conduct," adds Vegius, "as rare as it is admirable among preachers, who, being bound to discourse before a large audience on a variety of subjects, find a happy mean especially hard to maintain."

A similar moderation, and one equally rare at that time, characterized his attitude towards those invested with ecclesiastical authority, and this although, considering the actual state of the Church at the close of the Great Schism, there was no dearth of fitting objects on which to vent a display of satire and invective. And yet nowhere do we find St. Bernardine indulging in this pastime; on the contrary, he held a lack of discretion to be the cause of much mischief. Thus he deeply laments the fact that "a preacher after attacking crying abuses and calling down vengeance on the heads of the wicked, need only say

[1] St. Bernardine maintained that religious were bound to abstain from the exercise of all civil functions. Thus, in a sermon preached in Siena, in the year 1427, we find him inveighing against the established municipal custom of conferring on a Camaldolese the office of Camerlengo of the Commune.

a single word against the clergy for all his bitter reproaches to the obdurate sinners to be entirely forgotten, while the slight censure passed on the priests is alone cherished and remembered, and passed like a fable from mouth to mouth. But it is a still more remarkable fact that, when the audience seems bored by a sermon, or painfully affected by the heat or cold of the atmosphere, a single word uttered against either priests, prelates, or the religious orders will immediately suffice to arouse the sleepers and enliven the weary, to refresh those oppressed by the heat as by the fall of a refreshing dew, to transport the chilled into the regions of spring and summer, and likewise to render them impervious to hunger and thirst. And, more grievous still, the most hardened sinners consider themselves, compared to the clergy, upright and righteous men."[1]

Amongst the popular preachers of the day there were not a few who, in striking contrast to St. Bernardine's chaste sobriety, served by the passionate tenor of their utterances to shed fresh lustre on the latter's unbiased judgment. Prominent amongst these was a certain Carmelite, Thomas Conette by name, whose sermons to an audience often numbering sixteen or twenty thousand created a great sensation, despite their "interminable length," throughout Flanders, Artois and the territory of Amiens in the year 1428. His preaching, we are told, consisted "mainly" in an attack "on the vices and failings of the clergy and nobility." Not content, moreover, with

[1] *Sancti Bernardini Senenesis Opera*, Vol. I, p. 101.

denouncing, as many others had done, luxury in general and the extravagance of the female head-dress in particular, he actually strove to excite a tumult amongst the children on the street, by teaching them to hoot at the fine ladies of the place. This was, indeed, the origin of his popularity with the lower classes. Of the latter vast crowds, occasionally interspersed with a few perverted or intimidated aristocrats, were to be seen thronging around him, pulling out the hairs of the ass he rode to preserve as a memorial of him, and "paying him homage such as would have befitted one of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." But all this triumph, this "dominion," as it is termed by the chronicle, was destined to a tragic end. For having shortly afterwards, in the year 1432, repaired to Italy, there to continue his tirades against the clergy, Conette was, in consequence of some hazardous propositions on the subject of excommunication, apparently denounced in Rome and burned as a heretic.[1]

St. Bernardine's endeavours were all along chiefly directed towards the maintenance of peace, so that at the news of the slightest outbreak of discord he became anxious to hurry to the spot. Thus, while preaching in the Marches of Ancona in 1431, he was told that the Sienese had actually joined arms with the Duke of Milan, for the purpose of attacking Florence and menacing the papal states. Whereat, bringing

[1] See the *Chronicle of Enguerrand, de Monstrelet*, ed. by the *Société de l'Histoire de France*, Vol. IV, p. 303–6, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, Vol. XXIV, p. 379.

his sermons to an abrupt close, the energetic friar hastened to Siena, "his sweet native town," which, according to a contemporary biographer, "was very dear to him all his life long," and there succeeded, by dint of conferring with the corporation and conjuring the rest of the inhabitants, in so clearly demonstrating the perils and injustice of the course they were about to pursue that, by the magic of his word and in virtue of the prestige conferred by his sanctity, they were led to break off their alliance with Visconti and relinquish all thought of war. As for Bernardine, he had no sooner obtained his end than he instantly returned to the Marches to take up again the preaching so suddenly brought to a close. A life of such utter self-devotion would already have sufficed to increase the popular veneration and esteem entertained for Bernardine, even though his sanctity had not been divinely attested by constant miracles. At this time the bishopric of Ferrara, possibly also that of Urbino, were offered him, both of which he refused, as he had already done that of Siena. Nay, it was observed that the greater grew his fame the more did his whole being, down to his very language, gait and manner, express an intimate and unassumed conviction of his personal inferiority to others, expressed with a courtesy and simplicity which were pre-eminently his. Happy to submit even to a novice, we find him seeking counsel of his inferiors, and telling Friar Vincent, who as a rule accompanied him on his missionary journeys, never to dwell on the excellencies of his preaching, but always only on what seemed to him to be its defects.

When on one occasion a fellow friar inquired of him the surest way of fulfilling the duties of his state, St. Bernardine replied, "Descend, descend," while bending his whole body to the ground, thus signifying, both by word and gesture, that in voluntary self-abasement lay the whole secret of interior perfection.

But God Himself seemed desirous of exercising and strengthening the humility of His servant by dint of much humiliation, since in the year 1431, when apparently at the summit of his glory, his fame was once more clouded by calumny and he was accused for the second time of adhesion to heretical practices.

III

Bernardine's adversaries, though momentarily quelled by Martin V, had in fact never completely laid down their arms. For, several months after the Pope's decision, we find our saint complaining in public on several occasions of the way in which his doctrine on the name of Jesus still continued to be attacked from the pulpit. Having once met with papal approbation, however, he no longer hesitated to repudiate the charges made against him, and emphatically and solemnly reasserted his former teaching. "I am convinced," he says, "that I have spoken the truth to you concerning this holy name," and his detractors he compares to "men who spike the trunks of pear trees with thorns, so as to hinder naughty boys from mounting thereon," declaring that "they in like manner encircle the

base of the noble tree with thorns, in order that none may taste of its fruit." To judge by his own words, moreover, these "envious" ones, these "disseminators of error," were more numerous than elsewhere in his native parts. Hence he exclaims, "in Rome, in Perugia or elsewhere, a single word uttered against the doctrine I preach would suffice to call down anger on the speaker, whereas, though I am never blamed to my face here, as soon as my back is turned, how loud grows the voice of censure!" In consequence of this mean practice, he is constantly conjuring his adversaries to contradict him openly to his face, instead of meanly attacking him when no longer there to defend himself. Such wily craftiness must have been as odious as it was foreign to one of Bernardine's frank simplicity, who said all he had to say openly and plainly before multitudes, whence we find him entreating the people to pay no attention to such antagonists as should come to attack him after his departure, declaring his readiness at the slightest intimation of such an occurrence to leave all other occupations in order to reappear and do battle in his own defence. Callous, indeed, as he appeared with regard to any merely personal calumny, the slightest attack levelled at his doctrine on the holy name sufficed to arouse his indignation as though an outrage had been inflicted on Jesus Christ Himself, and he considered its vindication as strict a duty on his part as would have been the reparation of an insult offered to the host just consecrated by him during Mass. Wherefore, he

exclaims "*ut parturiens clamabo*": "I will cry out like one in childbirth, as I have already done."[1]

So intrepid a tone could not be without salutary effect on Bernardine's adversaries, who moreover, during Martin V's lifetime, probably deemed it useless to labour for a reversal of the sentence delivered in 1427. In the year 1431, however, Martin V expired and was succeeded by Eugenius IV, an austere and devout monk who, having already as cardinal given proof of his affectionate esteem for Bernardine, was expected to continue his predecessor's policy in the latter's regard. But on his accession to the

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari, edite da* Luciano Banchi, *passim.* Cf. specially Vol. I, p. 188; Vol. II, pp. 253, 282, 285, 415 *et seq.*—In the course of his Sienese sermons our saint took occasion to warn his audience against certain persons whose distrust of the name of Jesus actually went so far as to make them insist on its being coupled with that of Christ, and who had mutilated the "Hail, Mary!" and some of the gospel passages to tally with this caprice. These were doubtless the same individuals who pretended to believe that Bernardine's aim and that of his followers was to suppress the name of Christ altogether and to retain only the name of Jesus. Actual reference to an existing custom of substituting one name for the other is, it is true, to be found in a letter addressed by Poggio, a famous Humanist, to another individual of like repute, Francesco Barbaro, although it is probable that in embarking on so technically theological a discussion, that epicurean sceptic was prompted merely by his antipathy towards monasticism. Anyway, Poggio in this letter congratulates Barbaro, who was certainly far the better Catholic of the twain, on having consented to adopt the practice of quoting the name Christ after that of Jesus. "I rejoice," he writes, "to note that you have finally become converted to Christianity, repudiating the Jesuitic device (*relictâ illâ Jesuitate*) formerly figuring at the head of your letters, thereby announcing your deviation from such as impudently adhere exclusively to the name of Jesus, and who, having constituted a form of heresy of their own, but seek, under cover of exalting this name, to establish their reputation among the populace and the unlettered crowd in order to possess themselves of their goods." (*Poggii Epistolæ*, ed. Tonelli, Lib. III, ep. 26.)

papal throne, he was beset by a series of difficulties owing, in part, to a succession of plots and revolts on the part of the Romans, which soon obliged him to fly from the city; in part also to the enmity of the mighty and crafty Philip Maria Visconti; while not the least of his cares was the necessity for engaging on a conflict, waged up to the end of his reign, in support of those papal prerogatives which the Council of Bâle showed so decided a tendency to undermine. Whether or no these many disturbances gave our saint's adversaries ground for supposing that a pope thus harassed would more readily succumb to their machinations, it is impossible to tell; but it is a fact that, shortly after the new Pope's accession, they recommenced their attacks.

And once more we find Siena the mainstay of the opposition against our saint, who had, in fact, scarcely left the city after completing his mission of dissuading the inhabitants from seconding Visconti's designs, when news reached him that his doctrine on the holy name was being made the object of pulpit attack. Wherefore, turning back without the smallest hesitation, he set so resolutely and yet unembitteredly to work to refute these false accusations that the clergy and municipality, won over to his cause, ordered prayers to be recited and solemn veneration to be paid to the holy name.

From Siena, our saint proceeded to Bologna, where his sermons on the name of Jesus aroused such immense enthusiasm, that the canons in their fervour ordered the

sacred monogram (I.H.S.) to be magnificently painted on a large canvas and placed above the high altar of the church of San Petronio.

But Bernardine's adversaries, infuriated at this public mark of confidence, only waited for the preacher to turn his back before they inveighed against him from the pulpit. Nay, they succeeded in winning the inquisitor Ludovico Pisano over to their cause, who ordered the monogram to be erased and a painting of the crucifixion to be substituted in its stead—an act of violence producing such a sensational scandal among canons and people, that it finally reached the ears of the Pope, who, administering a severe rebuke to the inquisitor, ordered him to replace the sacred monogram over the altar, above the painting of the crucifixion.

But such incidents as these at Siena and Bologna were mere skirmishes in the great campaign which was to be waged between Bernardine and his adversaries on Roman soil. In virtue, namely, of a decree published by Martin V, authorizing the Promoter of the Faith to proceed secretly and without the slightest judicial sanction against such as were suspected of heresy, the saint's enemies succeeded in inducing Michael Plebano, the Promoter of that day, to take up the cause against Bernardine and his followers and to remit the final judgment to the Dominican Cardinal, John of Casanova. No time was lost in setting the proceedings on foot, and the Cardinal, after hearing the false witnesses summoned by Plebano to testify to the heresy, excesses and scandalous conduct imputed to the accused, cited the latter

by a brief, dated 24 November, 1431, to appear before him. Bernardine and his followers obeyed the summons, although the reception they received, as well as the insults heaped upon them, were by no means calculated to impress them with the judge's impartiality. Nevertheless the saint's confidence was unshaken; on leaving the Cardinal's presence, indeed, he overflowed with joy at being deemed worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.[1]

The trial had been hitherto conducted in such profound secrecy, that the Pope had remained in ignorance of the whole affair. As may easily be imagined, however, Bernardine's adherents lost no time in enlightening him; nay, the Sienese sent a special legate to Rome for the purpose of conferring with Cardinal Cassini, the former Bishop of Siena, on the subject, and Eugenius IV was no sooner informed of what was going on than, filled with righteous indignation at such shameful treatment of one whom he had already learned to appreciate at the time of the former accusation against him, the Pope hesitated not to exercise his authority on Bernardine's behalf, and promptly annulled all the proceedings against him by virtue of a Bull dated 7 January, 1432.[2] In this important document Eugenius emphatically declares the trial to have been set on foot without either his knowledge or approbation (*sine scitu et voluntate nostra*), notes

[1] "*Imo gaudens ibat a conspectu concilii, quoniam dignus habebatur pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati.*"

[2] The actual text of the Bull may be found in Wadding's *Annales Minorum*, Vol. X, p. 190.

the fact of the witnesses having borne false and libellous testimony (*minus veraciter et improbe deposuerunt*), and continues in this strain: "We have gathered from a trustworthy source, that Bernardine of Siena, of the order of Friars Minor, is considered and held to be a man of good repute, and of praiseworthy, pious and devout life, that he is esteemed not only as a sincere catholic Christian, but, furthermore, as a staunch opponent of heresy who, in consequence of his purity of life and laudable zeal to proclaim the word of God, and as the salutary fruit of his good works, has come to be looked upon as a great preacher and irrefutable master, well-nigh throughout Italy, and even beyond its confines; that his name figures among the most famous sermonizers of the day; that never, as has been falsely alleged, was he accused of heresy by honourable or serious-minded men; that he is, on the contrary, conspicuous for his fervent attachment to the doctrines and traditions of the Roman Church, of the sovereign Pontiffs, as of the fathers and doctors thereof, teaching and preaching only, without the smallest deviation, whatever this same holy Church, the mother of the rest, holds and ordains, while exhorting the faithful to follow him in obedience to her precepts and our commands. We, therefore, desirous of beholding this same Bernardine at liberty to apply himself to his pious missionary task and to other good works without being exposed to the odious attacks already referred to, prompted by the above as well as by other personal motives, and in full cognizance of the facts of the case, of the in-

sinuations and of the origin of the means resorted to over this affair, as well as of every past and present detail connected with the same, do, in virtue of this present decree, abolish and declare null and void all these same proceedings." Thus for the moment it seemed as though the *causa finita est* had been uttered in St. Bernardine's favour, since all the vaunted obstinacy of his enemies had but led to such a glorification in his lifetime on the part of the Pope as is usually reserved exclusively to departed souls.[1]

IV

Already prior to this second approbation on the part of the Holy See the devotion to the name of Jesus had overstepped the narrow confines of Italy and spread itself throughout Christendom. And shortly after Martin V's

[1] His opponents, however, would not let the matter rest without making one last effort to secure Bernardine's condemnation; wherefore, finding their cause rejected by Eugenius IV, as it had been by Martin V, they determined to appeal to the Council of Bâle, then in collision with the Pope. Thus in the year 1438 Bernardine was denounced by an Augustinian before that assembly by reason of the tablets bearing the name of Jesus. The matter was, however, brought to an abrupt close on one of the assembled fathers declaring this devotion to have been already condemned by Martin V and consequently abandoned by our saint. (See *Historia concilii Basiliensis*, cap. 79, by Augustinus Patricius, and L'Abbé's *Concilia*, Vol. XIII, 1561.) Both these assertions being, however, in flat contradiction to the above-mentioned facts, are, by the Bollandists and by the author, regarded as incorrect (cf. the *Life of St. John of Capistrano*, Vol. X, for the month of October) and as affording another instance of the already noted equivocation, intentional or otherwise, to which Martin V's decree appears to have given rise. Possibly it is to the same quibble Poggio alludes in an undated letter, in which he congratulates Bernardine "on having renounced the one thing viewed as somewhat reprehensible in his conduct." (Poggii, *Epistolæ*, ed. Tonelli, Lib. IX, ep. 3.)

decision on 8 June, 1427, at a general chapter of the Minorites held at Vercelli for the purpose of proclaiming St. Bernardine's triumph, we find the friars called upon to exert themselves to the utmost for its propagation.[1] Amongst those who distinguished themselves herein, was a certain Friar Richard, a popular French preacher and patriot, highly in vogue in the days of Joan of Arc, whom we find preaching at Troyes in the year 1428, in Paris in 1429, and at Orleans in 1431. There, grouped around the pulpit usually erected in the market-place, thousands of people stood for five or six consecutive hours spellbound by the preacher's now jovial, now pathetic force of language, listening to his admonitions to do penance, or watching numerous specimens of feminine head-dress and of games of hazard given ruthlessly to the flames. "More persons were," we are assured, "converted by him to piety than by all other sermonizers who have preached during the last hundred years." And he it is whom we find recommending the wearing of small lead medals with the sacred monogram upon them as a safeguard in moments of peril.[2]

[1] A fact mentioned by M. Siméon Luce in his work *Jeanne d'Arc à Domrémy*, p. 243. Though Wadding refers to this general chapter of Minorites, yet he did not succeed in unearthing the documents relating thereto. It may be as apposite here to remark that we should do well to compare some of M. Simeon Luce's assertions regarding the Dominicans with a refutation by the pen of the Dominican Father Chapotin, entitled, *La guerre de cent ans, Jeanne d'Arc et les Dominicains.*

[2] *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*, of the year 1429. Some of these medals have been rediscovered and reproduced in the *Revue Archéologique* (new series, Vol. III, p. 432). After eagerly adopting the same, however, the Parisians, on learning that Friar Richard had sided with the Armagnacs, caused the medals to be either destroyed or flung into the Seine.

The devotion to the holy name was also at this time introduced into Picardy and Burgundy by St. Colette, who adopted the name of "Thesus" as the badge of her reform of Franciscanesses, and who was wont to head her letters, and even sometimes the address, with the holy name either by itself, or coupled with the name of Mary. Joan of Arc, moreover, who, on hitherto insufficient grounds, is alleged to have been affiliated to the third Order of St. Francis, was, at any rate, on the best of terms with the Minorites, and, caused, as we know, the name of Jesus and Mary to be painted on her standard, engraved on her ring, and inscribed at the head of her dispatches.[1] On one of the Parisian parliamentary registers there is a small pen-and-ink sketch of the maid carrying a standard on which St. Bernardine's monogram is distinctly visible,[2] while the last words she uttered at her death, 30 May, 1431, were an invocation to the name of Jesus; nay, at the trial for revision, one of the witnesses deposed "to having heard it said that the name of Jesus appeared inscribed in the flames of the stake."

St. Bernardine's renewed triumph in the year 1432 proved naturally as highly conducive towards the spread of this devotion as towards reanimating the zeal of his followers. Thus we find St. John of Capistrano,[3] in his wanderings through Italy, France and Germany, exposing the tablet to the veneration of the vast crowds which flocked to hear

[1] Cf. Siméon Luce, *Jeanne d'Arc à Domrémy*.

[2] This sketch is found reproduced in the fine work of the Capuchin Fathers on *St. François d'Assise* (librairie Plon). [3] 1385-1456.

him, and invoking the holy name when, together with Hunyadi, he leads the crusades against the Turks. By pronouncing the holy name St. James of the Marches[1] wrought many miraculous cures, while blessed Bernardine of Feltre,[2] and blessed Matthew of Girgenti,[3] the one in central Italy, the other in Sicily, strove to establish the custom of carving the name of Jesus over doorways of houses and, better still, to implant the same in the hearts of men. Their example was followed by blessed Thomas Illyricus in central France, who, in imitation of our saint, induced the card manufacturers to fabricate leaflets inscribed with the sacred monogram, thereby greatly facilitating the spread of this devotion. Nor did Spain in the fifteenth century remain external to so enthusiastic a movement, as is amply testified by the existence of the *Casa del Cordon*, at Burgos, so named after the cord of St. Francis which appears carved above the doorway, beneath the arms of the Count and Countess de Haro, at that time patrons of the Observance, above which again figures St. Bernardine's I.H.S., destined, in the sixteenth century, to play a still more prominent part in Church history, as the chosen badge of the Company of Jesus. And, lastly, to come down to more recent times, we read in the life of the Franciscan saint, Leonard of Port Maurice,[4] who, three centuries after our saint, arose to continue his work in Italy, that on all his missionary tours he bore a standard inscribed in gilt letters with the name of Jesus.

[1] 1391-1476. [2] 1437-1494. [3] Died in 1451. [4] 1676-1751.

In towns where St. Bernardine's tablets are still preserved, such as Siena, Volterra, Bologna, Rome, Orte, Treviso, Camajore, etc., they are to a great extent regarded as objects of veneration down to the present day. The preservation of this pious tradition is doubtless due to the ancient custom of confiding these and similar relics to the care of special confraternities, by whom they used on specified occasions to be carried in solemn procession.[1] The Church likewise endorsed the devotion by affording it a place in her sacred liturgy. St. Bernardine himself is said to have composed a rudimentary office of the holy name, leaving it to be completed and extended by his disciple, blessed Bernardine of Busti. In the year 1530, moreover, Pope Clement VII, acceding to an old request on the part of the Minorites, gave leave for a feast of the holy name to be celebrated on 14 January. This permission, accorded as a special privilege to the diocese of Siena in 1582, and to that of Florence in 1684, was finally, on demand of the emperor Charles VI, extended in the year 1722, by Pope Innocent XIII, to the universal Church, the second Sunday after Epiphany being fixed for its celebration.

Such was the triumphal destiny of a devotion inaugurated by our saint in the teeth of glaring opposition. That he is the universally recognized founder of the same may be gathered from Italian works of art of the fifteenth and

[1] In a short popular account of St. Bernardine, entitled, *l'Apostolo dell' Italia nel secolo XV*, Signor G. Olmi furnishes some interesting information on this point gathered from an intimate acquaintance with various parts of Italy (see pp. 273 to 335.)

sixteenth centuries, on which he is constantly depicted, holding a tablet set in a gilt frame, sometimes round, but more often square in shape, in the centre of which are engraved the letters I.H.S. encircled with rays, while underneath figures some such appropriate text as "*Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus*."

The same idea is conveyed by two fine medals struck shortly after our saint's death by Antonio Marescotti, a sculptor from Ferrara, bearing on their obverse the saint's bust with the motto: "*Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus*," on their reverse the sacred monogram surrounded by rays with the device: "*In nomine Jhe omne genu flectatur celestium, terrestriv. inferno.*"[1]

An apter epitome can then scarcely be conceived of our saint's life than that given in the pregnant words of the old chronicle: "*Bernardino percorre l' Italia, portando Gesù.*"[2]

V

The year 1432 was indeed to prove a memorable date in our saint's life, since it not only witnessed this glorious rehabilitation on the part of the Pope, but furthermore ensured to him the friendship of no less a person than the Emperor Sigismund. In those days already the imperial power was on the wane in Italy compared to what it had been during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when it bid fair to rival

[1] Cf. third edition of M. A. Heiss's interesting work, *Les Médailleurs de la Renaissance*, Pl. IV, Nos. 2 and 4.

[2] Ugolini, *Storia del Ducato di Urbino*, quoted by Muratori, Vol. XXI.

that of the Papacy itself. The period of its decadence, in fact, dated from the great Hohenstauffen defeat, since from that time forward the Emperor had come to be regarded in Italy as a needy adventurer, destitute of men and means, harbouring no vast political designs, and bent on coining money by means of such privileges as it was still in his power to confer.

Sigismund had already governed the Empire under the title of King of the Romans for twenty-one years when, in the year 1431, he determined to cross the Alps in hopes of securing his coronation as emperor. Little success attended his negotiations with the Pope, however, a fact doubtless owing to the existence of the imperial alliance with Visconti and support of the Council of Bâle; whence the Emperor found himself reduced to the awkward alternative of either fixing his court for the present where he then happened to find himself, at Siena, or of fighting his way through to Rome in the teeth of Florentine and Venetian opposition—a task to which the meagre force at his disposal would certainly prove unequal. He therefore determined on the former as the most feasible course to pursue. And it was at Siena that he got to know our saint, though what led up to their intimacy, whether Bernardine appeared before him for the purpose of refuting certain false reports that may possibly have been noised abroad, or whether Sigismund himself expressed the wish to make the acquaintance of the celebrated preacher, it is impossible to say. But what is certain is, that from the first day of their meeting the

Emperor felt himself attracted by Bernardine; nay, so strongly was he drawn towards him that the saint's presence soon became one of the necessities of life to Sigismund, who was constantly present at his Mass and sermons, or else engaged in conversation with him, and who, according to his own words, considered a day passed without sight of Bernardine a day without light. The saint, however, far from being dazzled by these signal marks of favour, regarded them but as an occasion to further the Prince's spiritual welfare and the interests of the Church.

After spending nine months at Siena the Emperor finally, in the April of 1493, signed a treaty with Eugenius IV, acceding to all the papal demands and furnishing the necessary guarantees, in return for which he secured the Pope's assent to his coronation. Sigismund, thereupon, at once started for Rome, taking Bernardine along with him, and on the 31st of May the coronation took place, amid great pomp and rejoicing, in the Vatican basilica. The simple friar, meanwhile, holding aloof from all festivities, devoted his spare time to missionizing the various quarters of Rome.

Sigismund, however, tarried but a few days after his coronation in the Eternal City; whereupon he returned to his dominions, once more followed by our saint, who, ever a Minorite at heart, and wholly unsullied by the world, followed in the imperial train, mounted on a small ass. A strange contrast indeed to the rest of the brilliant retinue, and one sure to excite mockery and raillery amongst the bystanders! Thus, on one particular occasion, as the imperial

procession was traversing the streets of Aquila, a slater standing on a roof began, we are told, to ridicule the simple friar and to jeer at him, saying: "Whither is our pontiff riding in such state?" Hardly, however, had the words passed his lips, than a great wind arose, and threw him to the ground, when, in a severely wounded state, he begged to be laid at the friar's feet, imploring his forgiveness, and beseeching Bernardine to make the sign of the cross over him. And no sooner was this done, than the man rose up completely cured.

When Sigismund had reached the frontiers of Tuscany, the saint's task of peacemaker between the Pope and the Emperor being accomplished, Bernardine bid adieu to his illustrious friend. Sick of court life, he was happy to be free again to seek retirement within the walls of that convent of Capriola, which, founded by him just outside the walls of Siena in the year 1405, had been, the reader will remember, the scene of several years' peaceful preparation for a busy missionary life.

CHAPTER IV

SERMONS

I. St. Bernardine retires to Capriola with a view to composing his sermons. His works edited by Père de la Haye. Their authenticity. Reason why the sermons are in Latin.

II. Subjects treated of in the discourses contained in the afore-mentioned edition. They bear, both in matter and in form, a theological stamp. Abuse of categorical divisions and Biblical quotations. Influence of scholasticism on the preaching of the day.

III. These sermons must not be confounded with those actually delivered by the saint, since they are, in fact, dissertations intended to elucidate his teaching and to serve as a guide in the pulpit to himself and others.

IV. His eloquence asserts itself notwithstanding the somewhat dry dogmatical structure of his works. Quotations from his sermons on sinners, on luxury, on poverty, peace and St. Mary Magdalen after the Resurrection.

V. Several discourses recorded by persons among the audience. Course of sermons delivered by Bernardine in Siena in the year 1427, on which occasion the smallest digressions and most trivial incidents are noted by the recorder, who, it is assumed, must have been familiar with a form of shorthand.

VI. Unquestionable authenticity of these recorded sermons. Contrast between these and the Latin discourses. In the former, we seem to catch the preacher's living, popular utterance. Use of similes, metaphors and anecdotes. What estimate should we form of this popular sermonizing? Bernardine contrasted with Maillard.

VII. Divers questions treated of in the Sienese sermons: the Assumption, preaching, slander, factions, discord, peace, the follies of fashion, commerce, the reciprocal duties of husband and wife, feasts of Mary. The saint threatens the people with the anger of God. The *condottieri*. Final farewell. These sermons throw valuable light on to the preaching of the day.

I

ON his return to Capriola our saint, from the year 1433 to about 1436, embraced a sedentary life, as opposed to the wandering existence led by him for the last sixteen

years. In the case of one so averse to sparing himself in any way, the mere need of repose would not suffice to explain this state of outward inactivity, nor are we, as a matter of fact, in ignorance of the motives that impelled his course of action. After the attacks levelled against his teaching, which had just received the twofold approbation of the Holy See, he deemed it expedient, namely, to retire for a space into solitude, there in peace and quiet to compile a series of sermons which should afford the world a detailed account of his doctrine, and render it proof against future calumny.[1] He was, in fact, about to undertake a vast treatise of dogmatic and moral theology, intended to assist himself and others in their preaching.[2] And in this herculean task he was upheld by his conscious ability to furnish his fellow-labourers on the missionary field with more solid matter and material than was afforded them by the manuals then in vogue. That he was not mistaken herein was testified by the astounding rapidity with which his sermons, on their appearance, penetrated to foreign parts. Contem-

[1] The reader desirous of picturing to himself the saint's workroom is referred to an inventory enumerating the various objects found in his sanctum and drawn up on 10 June, 1444, immediately after his death, by three *gonfalonieri* of Siena. Among other things, mention is made of his spectacles, and of books either by his own pen or which he used for reference. Among the former is a MS. entitled, *Una bolla di Papa Eugenio che contiene la confermatione della sua vita e dottrina.* This inventory, preserved at the Sienese *Archivio di Stato*, has recently been published by Professor Orazio Bacci, under the title of *Inventario degli oggetti e libri lasciati da S. Bernardino da Siena.* (Castelfiorentino tipogr. Giovanelli e Carpinetti, 1895.)

[2] Bernabæus Senensis says of the "books" written by Bernardine at Capriola: "*Eosque in lucem, ut reliquis ipsi prodessent, edidit.*"

porary biographers are indeed full of the fact how not only in Italy, but likewise in France and Spain, in Germany and in the Far East, preachers sought therein for inspiration until it came to be acknowledged as the best work of the kind then in existence, as upholding the standard to which every one strove to attain. Thus we find Roberto da Lecce, a preacher greatly in vogue during the latter half of the fifteenth century, declaring that his colleagues in general, and he himself in particular, prided themselves on emulating Bernardine's style and method, and that they were in the habit of making frequent use of the saint's sermons, which they would, in fact, many a time merely repeat word for word as they stood, a proceeding attended by great success.[1]

In the seventeenth century, Père Jean de la Haye, of the Friars Minor, undertook to publish all the works of our saint which had then been brought to light in five quarto volumes.[2] This edition comprises not only the sermons composed at Capriola between the years 1433 and 1436, but likewise several of a later date, such as the advent course *De christianâ vitâ*, wherein mention is made of Friar Vincent's death which occurred only in the year 1442.[3]

[1] See Roberto da Lecce's discourse on St. Bernardine to be found at the end of a volume entitled, *Sermones Roberti de Licio, de laudibus sanctorum.*

[2] *Sancti Bernardini Senensis ordinis seraphici Minorum, Opera omnia.* Three editions of this are in existence, of which the first two appeared in Paris and at Lyons during Père de la Haye's lifetime, while the third was published in Venice in the year 1745. The author's references are to the Lyons edition of 1650.

[3] *Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III, p. 37 *et seq.*

From contemporary evidence it may, indeed, be inferred that our saint several times revisited Capriola during the latter years of his life in order to complete and revise his works.

A collation of the most ancient and reliable MSS. with the edition published by Père de la Haye tends to confirm the authenticity of the bulk of the sermons and treatises edited by him.[1] Some of the discourses of secondary importance are, it is true, proved to be apocryphal and must in future be omitted,[2] while others again are found to be of doubtful authenticity and deserving of a closer examination.[3] Certain repetitions, moreover, might in future be advantageously suppressed,[4] while several sermons and treatises, hitherto ignored among a pile of unexplored MSS. easily unearthed from Italian libraries, should reappear

[1] A careful investigation of the authenticity of the works published by Père de la Haye, recently undertaken by Father Aloysius Tassi of the Friars Minor, was prompted by a petition sent up to Rome in 1862 by the chapter of the Order, requesting St. Bernardine to be declared a doctor of the Church. The various documents relating to the inquiry instituted thereupon by the Congregation of Rites appeared in Rome in the year 1877 in the form of a quarto volume, to which the present author was fortunate enough to obtain access, though it is now out of print. It contains, besides Father Aloysius Tassi's inquiry into the question of authenticity, the petition of the Minorite Order with marginal annotations by bishops and other prominent prelates, the allocution of the Promoter of the Faith charged with raising objections, and lastly Msg. Ferrata's reply, in our eyes the most important document of all.

[2] Notably the sermon, *De Expugnatione paradisi.*

[3] For instance, the Lenten course *De Puguâ spirituali* and the *Commentarii in Apocalypsim.*

[4] See either a description of the wonders of creation occurring Vol. I, p. 257, and Vol. II, p. 343, or the reflections on Mary Magdalen's conduct after the Resurrection, found Vol. I, p. 307, and Vol. II, p. 432.

among the rest. It is, indeed, devoutly to be wished that the day may come when a critical edition of our saint's works will be undertaken with the scholarship and impartiality displayed at the present day by the Franciscans of Guaracchi, near Florence, in their edition of the works of St. Bonaventure.[1]

It is noteworthy that the sermons comprised in Père de la Haye's five volumes are all in Latin, although Bernardine notoriously preached in Italian. The same anomaly occurs in all written sermons published by preachers during the Middle Ages, whence the distinguished editors of the *Histoire Littéraire* were led to conclude Latin to have been the habitual tongue in the medieval pulpit. This opinion is, however, no longer tenable in the face of recent research,[2] which has once for all established the fact that, save when addressing an exclusively clerical assembly, medieval sermons were held in what was known as "the vulgar tongue," the only language understood by the mass of the people. Only when subsequently publishing their sermons did preachers turn them into Latin, which, as the language of Church and University, was the tongue they deemed most fitting for that purpose. So great, indeed, was their contempt for the use of the vernacular on such occasions that we find Berthold of Ratisbonne,

[1] We find this wish for a new edition of Bernardine's works expressed some years ago already in the *Kirchenlexicon* by the distinguished Father Zeiler, since become one of the chief collaborators of the edition of the works of St. Bonaventure.

[2] See Lecoy de la Marche, Bourgoin, Aubertin, Langlois, Janssen, etc.

a famous thirteenth-century preacher, on learning that some of his sermons were being thus circulated, republishing them in Latin headed by a preface wherein he complains of their publication in "the vulgar tongue," which he stigmatizes as faulty, begging the readers, desirous of ascertaining his true doctrine, to refer to the Latin version.[1] When jotting down, if not the entire discourse, at least its outline before delivery, Latin was likewise employed, as was notably the case with St. Vincent Ferrer.[2] In Surgant's *Manuale Curatorum*, dating from the close of the Middle Ages, which obtained a widespread circulation in Germany, it is laid down as advisable to make the first mental concept of the discourse in Latin, a method entailing a subsequent version into the vernacular prior to delivery. To facilitate this task there existed certain vocabularies, *vocabularii prædicantium*, while the manuals treated *de regulis vulgarisandi*. There were, indeed, some few preachers who were at home in the pulpit only in Latin, as was the case with a certain abbot of Mont Saint-Michel and Doctor of the Sorbonne, who we find opening his discourse in presence of Charles VI, in the year 1406, with the words: "Pardon me, sire, if I be not as fluent as I could wish in French. I would far rather have spoken in Latin."[3] And the use of Latin for

[1] A fact communicated to the author by Father Zeiler, editor of the works of St. Bonaventure.

[2] *Vie de Saint Vincent Ferrier*, by the Rev. P. Fages.

[3] Aubertin, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature françaises au moyen âge*, Vol. II, p. 320.

public sermons persisted even after St. Bernardine's day, operating still at the close of the fifteenth century, as we find exemplified in Savonarola, some of whose discourses, both delivered and originally recorded by the audience in Italian, were for the purpose of publication translated by the same scribes into Latin, in order, it was said, to bequeath to them "a more literary form."[1] When Wimpheling, moreover, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was about to undertake a complete edition of Gerson's works, he had such sermons as were originally delivered and jotted down in French translated into Latin,[2] while, not many years later, Luther gave to the world a Latin version of the sermons preached by him at Wittenberg in 1516 and 1517.

II

The five volumes of Père de la Haye's edition comprise a number of sermons as well as several dissertations. The majority of the former fall under the head of Lenten or Advent courses, each group bearing a separate title, such as, *Quadragesimale de christianâ religione*, *Evangelio æterno*, *Adventuale de christianâ vitâ*, etc. As a rule, however, these headings have no direct bearing upon the context, the grouping being somewhat arbitrary and artificial. For the sermons comprised in these Lenten and Advent courses

[1] Villari, *Girolamo Savonarola e il suo tempo.*

[2] *Essai historique et critique sur les sermons français de Gerson*, by the Abbé (now Cardinal) Bourret, p. 28 *et seq.*

treat of a variety of topics, and while some undoubtedly possess a sequence of their own and go to make up a compendium of Christian doctrine, others again stand alone and in no connection to the preceding and following discourses. It is evident, therefore, that the preacher's aim was to minister to the actual and pressing needs of the souls around him rather than to figure as the author of a complete text-book of theology. Thus we find him now exposing the principles of dogmatic belief, now bent on rekindling fervour, or, still oftener, preaching a reform of morals. Moral theology, indeed, manipulated by our saint with keen penetration and subtle casuistry, reigns supreme in these pages. Nor must the reader be surprised to light amid these discourses on topics known to have been treated by Bernardine in this or that town, as, for instance, the subject of factions, discords, or of games of hazard, of the follies of fashion or of usury, while a case of conscience appertaining to commercial life and devotion to the holy name are also dealt with.

The doctrinal substance of his writings is both solid and abundant. Of this, though the present author is himself no adequate judge, he can refer the reader to persons versed in sacred science whose estimate of our saint from that point of view is of the very highest order, while a preacher of the day, in marked sympathy with the times, is well known to make frequent use of St. Bernardine's works, to which he declares himself indebted for many a happy inspiration. It is then small matter of wonder that, some

years ago, the heads of the Franciscan Order should have petitioned the Holy See to honour our saint with the title of Doctor of the Church. The matter was, indeed, actually sent up to Rome for consideration,[1] though it was never brought to a successful issue, probably out of reluctance to create a precedent for the multiplication of similar demands.

Not only in matter but in form our saint reveals himself in the course of his works as a typical theologian. His style is replete with sober gravity and dignity, savouring of austerity. All intent on the logical development of his argument, the author straightway and without preamble lays down the theme of his discourse, splitting it up into articles, and these into chapters, with an eye to symmetry apt here and there to become oversubtle and constrained. For though Bossuet's case proves the possibility of sermons, dry, artificial and symmetrical in form, abounding in eloquence and gaining in weight and solidity by their very construction, yet, in order to serve this end, the outward skeleton must be animated with inward life, which cannot always be said of St. Bernardine's Latin discourses, where the constant recurrence of divisions tends to distract instead of riveting the attention as well as to impede that irresistible, continuous and progressive flow which can alone captivate the reader. The transition from article to chapter is, moreover, abrupt and effected without skill, often indeed by the bold, bare statement of the preacher's intent to pass from one to the other. If, only within these self-imposed

[1] See for an account of the document relating to the inquiry above, p. 136.

limits, he would occasionally allow his fancy free play! But no, his confines are too strictly limited to afford room for an outburst of any kind, while the closely-reasoned argument, sometimes comprising a mere string of carefully enumerated proofs (of which some chapters and articles contain some twenty or twenty-five[1]), will permit of no digression and recalls rather a summary or table of contents. The proofs consist mostly of phrases or sayings from the Bible, the gospel or the Fathers, it being the theological custom of the day to rest every assertion on a text from Scripture. So constant is his use of this method that some of his discourses are little more than a mosaic of quotation, and that he might easily be suspected of the intent of compiling a treasury of Biblical and other sacred texts. Père de la Haye gives him credit, in fact, for having amassed 3,952 texts of the Old and 2,655 of the New Testament. And though all are not equally apposite and pertinent to the occasion, and some few might be accused of sinning in the direction of what has been called the *accommodating sense*, yet it is to our saint's credit that, in contrast to many a preacher of his day, his works are entirely free from profane or pagan quotations.

This system of divisions and quotations must be laid to the charge of the times in general, rather than to that of our author in particular, since, in the thirteenth century, scholasticism had obtruded its methods upon sacred eloquence as upon every other phase of learning. While

[1] See, for instance, *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. I, pp. 259–60, and 346–47.

dissociating ourselves from the ignorant and prejudiced disdain occasionally meted out to an intellectual movement not without a moment of greatness and originality, it must, we think, be frankly admitted that, as regards the pulpit, scholasticism exercised no beneficent influence. For was not its action to retard and impede that great current of sacred eloquence sprung up in the twelfth century, and which, the outcome of a medieval revival to which the learning of our day is inclined to devote much study and appreciation, had begun to spread throughout Christendom? But haply in vain had St. Francis of Assisi, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, set the example of a popular eloquence as exempt from scholastic intricacies, narrowness and subtlety as it was born of freshness, spontaneity and refreshing geniality, of genuine emotion and all-embracing charity, so that of all human utterances it may perhaps be said to most closely resemble the simplicity of the gospel narrative: he found but few imitators, nay, even among the immediate companions and spiritual sons of the *Poverello*, his influence could not long prevail in an atmosphere fraught with scholasticism. Thus, to judge by all the extant writings of St. Antony of Padua and St. Bonaventure, the scholastic spirit had wholly claimed them for its own, while along with Alexander of Hales and Duns Scotus, the Minorite Order could boast not a few of the most renowned and subtle exponents of Aristotelian dialectics among its members. And the preaching of the fourteenth century only testifies to an increase

of the scholastic pedantry and routine which, in the days of the classical revival of the fifteenth century, still reigned supreme, so that in all the sermons that remain to us of Bernardine's immediate predecessors, contemporaries and successors we meet with the same symmetrically laboured construction, divisions and subdivisions, the like superabundance of Biblical texts often somewhat arbitrarily distorted from their primitive meaning. Not only was this the case with St. Vincent Ferrer,[1] blessed John Dominci,[2] blessed Jeremias of Palermo, and St. Antonine, but likewise, though in greater measure and moderation, with Gerson, with Roberto da Lecce, and even with Maillard, that famous French preacher who flourished at the close of the fifteenth century. It was left to the genius of Savonarola,

[1] St. Vincent Ferrer's discourses are full of whimsical contrivances, as, for instance, when he compares confession to medicine and enumerates seven physical remedies, which he declares to be analogous to those prescribed in order to obtain a spiritual cure. Such are: 1° *Facies inspicitur*; 2° *pulsus tangitur*; 3° *urina attenditur*; 4° *dietta præscribitur*; 5° *sirupus immittitur*; 6° *purgatio tribuitur*; 7° *refectio conceditur*. In another place, speaking of the sleep of the soul under the burden of sin, he retails the acts which follow on waking and which, according to him, are ten in number, namely, a man opens his eyes, sits up, dresses in haste, leaves his bed, spits, draws on his stockings, girds himself, washes his hands, does other odds and ends, and then takes his breakfast, all of which actions furnish him with the theme of a spiritual allegory.

[2] See, for instance, the latter half of one of Dominici's sermons on Holy Communion wherein, propounding the idea that man's soul should resemble Christ's sepulchre, he enumerates, with their spiritual analogy, seven properties of the tomb; namely, 1st, the sepulchre is a cave; 2nd, the cave is on a rock; 3rd, there is only one rock; 4th, the tomb is new; 5th, no one has yet been laid therein; 6th, the sepulchre belongs to a stranger; 7th, the owner's name is Joseph.

as an echo of Biblical prophecy, to break with this old tradition.

III

It is therefore by no means surprising that the sermons attributed to St. Bernardine should so strongly bear the impress of the times in which he lived, though it is singular that we meet with nothing else with scarcely any trace, amid this dialectic structure, of that popular eloquence, described by his biographers as full of a transporting variety, as striking now a lively, now a pathetic note.

The reader will, indeed, be apt to ask himself the question how in the world such dry, if learned, dogmatic dissertations could so captivate great city crowds. The answer is not hard to find. For the sermons edited by Père de la Haye, although they undoubtedly emanate from Bernardine's pen, were never delivered by him, nor, in writing them in his cell at Capriola, did he ever intend either to put his actually spoken discourses on paper or to compose some capable of future recitation as they stood. Indeed, in consideration of the past, his sole endeavour was to lay a detailed stress on his doctrinal tenets in such a way as to obviate any further attempts at slanderous misinterpretation, and furthermore he intended to arm himself for the future by laying in a store of material, knowing well that, owing to his constant journeying and continual preaching, he should lack the time necessary to cogitate each individual discourse, and should therefore be glad of matter carefully prepared

and selected to carry about with him on his wanderings.[1] These dissertations, then, were to serve as occasion and the needs of the case required, and naturally the author would, in preaching, skip some parts, more amply develop others, utilize them in a combination suitable to his purpose, and, above all, infuse what this dry outline did not even aim at possessing, oratorical form, life and movement. And he similarly strove to facilitate the average preacher's task by charitably furnishing him with no ready-made sermons, but with material to be digested and moulded into shape. We may, indeed, gather this to have been the saint's intention from the testimony of no less a person than the author himself, who, on several occasions, qualifies his writings as *tractatus*,[2] which would, of itself, suffice to account for the variance in length of these sermons, some of which comprise not more than four or five folio pages, while others again number up to fifteen, twenty or forty of the same length. Nor did he miss any opportunity of explaining the character of his works. Thus, at the close of the first Lenten course,

[1] His contemporaries tell us that Bernardine carried "his books" everywhere about with him. They were placed on the donkey's back, whereon he himself would mount when overcome by fatigue. Æneas Sylvius remarks of this animal: "*Quem ipse aliquando fessus viâ solebat ascendere, quique suos libros deferebat.*"

[2] In the preamble, for example, to a series of discourses on contracts and usury, we read: ". . . *Necessarium reputavi, de contractibus et usuris, tractatum posteris tradere, non tamen verbo præsentibus prædicare, ut habeant minus docti, et sibi et aliis, in talibus materiam fideliter consulendi.*" Some lines further on the word *tractatus* again occurs. (*S. Bern. op.*, Vol. II, p. 200.) A long sermon on the Passion, moreover, ends thus: "*Explicit tractatus de Sacratissimâ Passione Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Amen.*"

we meet with the following counsel: "This work has proved longer than I thought. . . . Let those who consider the present sermons too long extract the bits which best please them, since every article of each sermon will furnish them with prepared and ordered material either for reading or discourse."[1] And again, at the opening of the second Lenten series, he says: "Although in the present work I have composed some very lengthy sermons, I have not done so with the intent of seeing them delivered on one occcasion, rather is it the weighty nature of the things discussed that has rendered me diffuse. However, I do not tie myself down to this length, but curtail, spin out, transpose and vary according to the demands of time, of my own pleasure or the needs of my audience, and I give others liberty to do likewise."[2] And further on he remarks of the series of discourses on contract and usury: "Although this treatise be compiled thus, yet a wise and discreet preacher will vary the sequence, by changing the order of the sermons, by curtailing and adding, and by generally adapting the material to the understanding and the dispositions of his audience. Thus, I myself, who have enumerated the proofs in this order for the sake of knitting the subject closer together, should not hesitate to depart therefrom under particular circumstances."[3]

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 355.
[2] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. II, pp. 6 and 7.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 200.

IV

The foregoing will doubtless suffice to convince the reader that the sermons edited by Père de la Haye must be regarded as an exposition of our saint's theological tenets rather than as a revelation of the secret magic of his word, and yet here and there we find traces of the preacher's eloquence breaking down scholastic barriers. This is particularly the case with longer passages, when the author, pen in hand, seems to have been suddenly struck by a spark of the emotion which fired him in the pulpit and to have for an instant yielded thereto. A few quotations will serve to illustrate our meaning.

In the opening passages of a sermon following one on games of hazard, a dissertation replete with divisions and allegories, and wherein, after he has evoked Satan mockingly parodying the various ceremonies of the Mass, he proceeds to retail in groups of five and five the fifteen properties of this vice and the twelve classes of mankind participating therein, the writer, before starting another subject and dividing it up in the usual way, is suddenly seized with pity for the sinners whose miseries he has just been analysing and utilizes his text, "*Si quis sitit, veniat ad me et bibat*," to address a singularly stirring appeal to these same wrong-doers. "*Si quis sitit, veniat ad me et bibat*, great is the divine mercy, contemning no man, repelling no man, disdaining to help no man; on the contrary, longing after and soliciting

all the world, desiring to save all men. . . . Jesus calls the whole world to Him, both the just man and the sinner, the corrupt and gamblers—all men in a word. The sinner Magdalen had doubtless heard her call in the temple, wherefore, as a thirsty sheep, she hurried to the fountain of love, where she drank and drank to intoxication. The publican, possibly also a gambler, having likewise heard the summons, came running in the eager thirst of his humility to drink, and so much did he drink that he came away justified. Come, then, ye gamblers and other evildoers, come to the fount of living waters. *Omnes sitientes venite ad aquas*, as it is said in Isaiah. *Bibite et inebriamini, carissimi*, in the words of the canticle, since Jesus Christ is addressing you all, when He says, as above, *Si quis sitit, veniat ad me et bibat*."[1] Other eloquent outbursts are prompted by the spectacle of evil, as, for example, in the peroration of a sermon on slander, wherein the preacher indulges in fiery invective against this sin, drawing a vivid picture of its miserable fruit.[2] At other times, again, the follies of fashion and the ruinous extravagance thereof are the objects of his scathing satire, and this not from a love of mockery, but in order to afford himself an opportunity of inculcating grave and pathetic home truths.[3] In pregnant, realistic metaphor he describes "the purple dyed in the blood of the poor," while the ladies clothed in rich dresses with long trains he takes to task as follows :—

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. I, p. 222. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 226 to 247.

"Shall I speak to you of the blasphemies which the sight of the dirt protected by raiment bought at so great a price arouses in the poor when, amid cruel sufferings from winter frost, they behold their own flesh and blood, their sons and daughters, tortured with cold, hunger and thirst on account of the wicked impiety and thoughtless want of compassion expressed by this luxury (literally by these trains, *saevâ impietate et durâ incompassione caudarum*)? Lend an ear, oh woman arrayed in a train (*o domina caudata*), pay heed, oh narrow mind, be attentive and hearken, oh deaf soul, to the voice of those that lament and call on their God for vengeance. . . . Listen to the groans of men with no clothes to cover them, racked over their work by hunger and thirst. Bent only on pleasing the eye of curiosity, no means are devised of ministering to the needs of these wretches. While dirt has no need to go in search of apparel, the poor man clamours loudly and in vain for food and clothing!"[1]

A little further on the preacher's invective is levelled against the head-dress of the day.

"How singular would it seem for a woman, on the death-day of her husband or of her father, to come to church, her head adorned with flowers! Yet it is far stranger still to behold a female ransomed by the blood of Christ, daughter and spouse of our Supreme Father, coming to Mass with her head not only a mass of flowers, but of gold and precious stones, of false hair and dye, the while the great sacrifice is being celebrated for a memorial of the Passion

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. I, p. 244.

of Christ, and the priest is upraising our Lord's body and blood in perpetual commemoration of Christ's elevation upon the cross. What vanity is thine, oh woman, that can lead you to adorn your head with such a mass of rubbish! Think of that divine head which causes the angels to tremble, and which, to expiate thy vanity, was pierced and wounded to the vital parts of the brain by a massive crown of thorns . . . while that head is crowned with thorns, yours is arrayed in precious stones; while those locks are matted with blood, your tresses, or rather the false locks you wear, are done up with skill. His cheeks are a mass of spittle, blood and wounds, yours are painted in various ways. His glorious eyes, whereon gaze the angels of God, are broken by the most cruel of deaths, the while your eyes are aglow with voluptuousness and filth. That sacred head, venerated by the angels themselves, consents to such ignominy for your sake, while you carry yours so haughtily that, as He bends down to offer you the kiss of peace, you only arm yourself for combat. He solicits you to tears of pardon, and you only reply by the insulting laugh of evil."[1]

But, while cursing luxury, how tenderly he blesses poverty, that virtue which, after the example of His spiritual Father, he had chosen for his well-loved bride! How inspired by exalted and tender love are his words on this subject! We feel instinctively that here we have him on a favourite topic, on a subject invested in his eyes with a unique charm.

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. I, p. 245.

"Oh, ye poor! follow my advice and run forward to greet Poverty; open wide your door at her approach, and throw yourselves into her arms. For though at first, it is true, her aspect is stern, so that not without cause has she been likened to an armed and sullen traveller of forbidding countenance; yet no sooner is she adopted as a friend, than she is transformed into the least troublesome, the most constant and lovable of guests. Trust me, and open the door to her without delay, and without waiting for her to force the lock and enter victoriously through the gate wrenched from its hinges, for, stern towards such as oppose, she is gentle towards those who welcome her."[1]

Inspired by the thought of poverty having been Christ's inseparable companion on earth, as also by the *Poverello's* well-known prayer,[2] Bernardine exclaims:—

"Jesus, my Saviour, at thy entry into this life, poverty received Thee in the holy crib and in the manger, and during Thy earthly sojourn deprived Thee of everything, so that Thou hadst not even where to lay Thy head. While fighting the fight of our redemption, that faithful companion was ever at Thy side, and when Thy disciples deserted and denied Thee, she, Thy sworn attendant, never swerved. Nay, then it was that she clasped Thee the more fervently. Then, when even Thy mother, who alone still honoured Thee in the faithfulness of her heart,

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. III, p. 25.

[2] For the text of this prayer, see the Abbé Le Monnier's *Vie de Saint Français* (5th ed.), Vol. I, p. 211.

was unable to draw nigh to Thee, owing to the height of the cross, then did victorious Poverty surround Thee with all her privations, as with a train of followers pleasing to Thy heart, pressing Thee the more tightly and inextricably in her arms. She it was who, far from lightening Thy cross, gave to Thee one hard and rough. She apportioned not the nails to the number of Thy wounds, neither did she soften nor sharpen their point, but she fashioned three of a kind, rough, ragged and blunt, so as to increase Thy sufferings. And when dying, parched with thirst, Thy faithful spouse was solicitous to deprive Thee of even a drop of water; nay, she it was who prepared for Thee at the hands of Thy cruel executioners so bitter a drink that, having once tasted it, thou couldst not partake of it. Thus, in the arms of Thy beloved didst Thou breathe forth Thy last. And, faithful to the end, she assisted at Thy burial, permitting Thee only a loan of sepulchre, perfumes and winding sheet. Nor was she absent at Thy resurrection, for gloriously didst Thou rise again in the arms of Thy holy spouse leaving everything behind Thee, both what Thou hadst borrowed and what had been offered Thee, and taking Thy spouse with Thee to heaven, leaving to worldlings the things of this world."[1]

In the same penetrating accents, our saint speaks of charity, treated of in the first six sermons of the Lenten course, *De Evangelio æterno*.[2] According to him, one of

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. III, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 2 *et seq.*

Charity's daughters is Peace, that peace which Bernardine went untiringly proclaiming throughout the length and breadth of torn and distracted Italy. Nay, so enchanting and transporting were the terms he used to depict this celestial virtue, that they ended by triumphing even over the fierce, implacable souls of those troublous times.

"In times of peace all things seem to express joy. The seed is sown in the fields, the corn ripens preparatory to the harvest, the vine flourishes, and the trees bear fruit, for the fury of war impedes not the free course of nature's expansion. Man, too, sleeps in security or wends his way through the meadows without fear of attack. In peace virginity flourishes, giving forth its perfume. Joyful is sober chastity and happy likewise is conjugal love in the sense of security from the intemperate violence of the soldiery. Art embellishes the towns, while the air is stirred by the sound of the pipe blown by the joyous shepherd lad leading his flocks and herds to pasture. In times of peace, moreover, the forests yield timber, and vineyards are planted, while houses are built and repaired and families are seen to multiply. Then there is much traffic among merchants with their merchandise, then are the monasteries stirred by the breath of solitude, then are churches and divine service held in reverence. Study, also, is vigorously prosecuted and works of piety are numerous. The word of God is likewise esteemed and bears fruit in the hearts of those who flock to hear it. Every man's rights are respected, so that no one has

cause to complain of injustice. In a word, Peace is alike favourable to all things, and, at her breath, everything seems a-tremor with joy."[1]

The sermons wherein he treats of the Passion and Redemption of Christ likewise afford us an idea of Bernardine's eloquence, when borne along on a strong tide of feeling. While following the sacred narrative step by step, he momentarily abandons himself to reflections, savouring of piety and of pathos. To give the reader an idea of our preacher's style on such occasions, we will venture on some extracts from a sermon on the Resurrection wherein the writer dwells at length on Mary Magdalen coming by herself, at dawn, to the sepulchre and full of woe at no longer finding there the body of her Lord.

"Oh Mary, what was the hope, what the intent and courage that sufficed to detain you thus alone at the grave? . . . He whom you seek seems, indeed, to pay no heed to your distress, not to see your tears nor to mind them. You call, and He hearkens not; you knock, and He opens not unto you. You follow after Him, and He flies at your approach. Alas! what is the matter? Alas! what is the cause of so great a change? How have things thus come to be reversed? Since Jesus holds aloof from you, perchance His love for you is no more. Formerly He cherished you. Formerly He defended you against the attacks of the Pharisee and lovingly pleaded for you with your sister. Formerly He extolled you, when you anointed His feet with perfume, when you

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. III, p. 58.

washed them with your tears and wiped them with the hairs of your head. Then it was that He sweetened your repentance and forgave you your sins. Formerly, when you were absent, He sought after you, calling to you when you were not by Him, and sending your sister to look for you in order to have you at His side. Oh good Lord! Your eyes grew moist at the sight of her tears, so that in loving Thee much she did but return Thy love. Thou didst call her brother Lazarus back to life, thereby transforming the lament of Thy beloved child into joy. Oh most sweet Master! wherein, then, has Thy handmaid offended Thee on whom Thou didst lavish such favours, what wound has she inflicted on Thy tender soul, in order to merit this withdrawal on Thy part? As for us we know of no sin imputable to her. . . . Why, then, does this woman who loves Thee and who has watched for Thee since sunrise prosecute her search in vain? Mary, pay heed to my counsel, and be content with such comfort as the angels bring you, inquiring of them, whether by chance, they know what has become of Him whom you seek. It occurs to me that they may have come to enlighten you, sent perchance by Him whose loss you deplore, in order to proclaim His resurrection and to allay your anguish."

At this point the preacher proceeds to enlarge upon Mary Magdalen's colloquy with the angels, and when he comes to the moment of Jesus' appearance under the form of a gardener, he exclaims :—

"She beheld Jesus without realizing that it was He, and

Jesus said to her: 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?' Oh Thou, towards whom her whole soul aspires, why inquire into the cause of her tears and into the object of her search? Dost thou ask her why she weeps, who, but a short time ago, with great anguish beheld Thee hanging on the cross? Dost Thou ask her the cause of her grief, who, only three days previously, had gazed on those torn and pierced hands which had so often blessed her, on those feet which she had covered with kisses and bathed in her tears? Now she believes Thy body, the body which she had come, by way of consolation, to anoint with perfumes, to have been removed, and yet Thou askest: 'Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' Jesus, Thou it was Who, by the irresistible power of Thy word, as well as by Thy beauty of soul, didst lovingly lead this woman towards Thee. When blotting out her sins, Thou didst attach her to Thy service by the invisible link of a boundless love. By Thy words and actions Thou didst set her heart aglow with love, having, with Thy breath, chased away her evil spirits. Thou hast wiped away her tears and hast not shunned the kisses of her lips. Thou hast expelled all perishable love from her heart, in order that she might walk with Thee in the way of peace. And now Thou dost actually inquire whom she is seeking! . . . Thou didst water her soul by the constant refreshment of channels invisible, and now that that love which Thou didst cause to flow from Thy soul into hers keeps her riveted to the sepulchre, Thou chosest this moment to inquire into the

motive of her tears. Thou alone art the cause of her lament and of her anguish. Wholly Thine, she hopes in Thee and is now driven to despair on Thy account. And with such fervour does she seek after Thee, that she can think of, and is troubled over, naught save Thee. Her devils have forsaken her and she is driven distracted on Thy account. Why ask her, therefore, 'Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' Is it in order to extract the reply that Thou it is whom she bewails, Thou whom she seeks? . . . Or is it done for the purpose of making her recognize Thee, notwithstanding Thy intention of hiding Thyself? She, in any case, taking Jesus for the gardener, addresses Him as follows: 'If Thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will carry Him away.' Oh great grief, oh wonderful love! This woman, enveloped by her grief as by a cloud, sees not the rising sun striking his first rays into her soul and entering in through the wounds of her heart. She is so devoured by love that her dimmed eyes behold without recognition. She looks on Jesus and sees Him not. Oh Mary, if it is Jesus for whom you are in search, why do you not recognize Him? So, Jesus is come to you; Him for Whom you long is your questioner, and you take Him for a gardener! Jesus it is, He who is in truth a gardener of a kind, since He has sown the good seed in the garden of your soul, and now comes to tear up the weeds of infidelity. Of whom, then, are you speaking when you say: 'If thou hast taken Him away?' What do these words signify? Why not pronounce the

name of Him Whom you seek? . . . Such is the effect of a predominating desire that it deludes the sufferer into thinking that the whole world is able to divine their thought. . . . And why do you, a woman, add 'and I will carry Him away?' Joseph himself held back and was afraid to take Jesus' body from the cross without first obtaining permission from Pilate to do so. But you fearlessly hide not under cover of the night. Unhesitatingly you affirm: 'and I will carry Him away.' Oh Mary, if by chance the body of Jesus had been deposited in the court of the high-priest, where the Prince of the Apostles had warmed himself, what would you then do? If it had been laid in the market-place, in the midst of a throng, how would you set about your task? If it were in the house of Pilate guarded by soldiers, what could you effect? 'And I will carry Him away.' Oh superb audacity! Though a woman, you resort to no restrictions, you place no limit to the extent of your devotion, you speak without fear and promise without hesitation. Oh woman, great is your constancy, great your faith! But how, by what means, by what device, by the employment of what force and strength would you lift so heavy a body single-handed, when, in placing it in the tomb, you were aided by numerous carriers? Do you imagine these men to be still by you? But they have departed. 'And I will carry him away.' Love, indeed, considers itself master of the impossible, and is often inclined to presume too much on its strength. Oh good Jesus, deign not to heighten her desire, since for three days it has already

consumed her. How can her soul's hunger be stilled without Thy presence and the offering of the bread of Thy heart? Nor will the breath long remain in her frame unless, by disclosing Thyself to her, Thou dost restore life to her soul. Then Jesus said to her: 'Mary.' No sooner had He uttered her name than the voice of Jesus penetrated into her soul, causing her in this one word to recognize those well-known accents. . . . Her Master was in the habit of calling her thus. In this utterance of her name, moreover, she tasted of the divine goodness and thus recognized her Lord in Him who so addressed her. . . . Oh most sweet Master and Lord, how good art Thou to those who are clean of heart! Happy are they who seek after Thee in the simplicity of their hearts, and how replenished are they who put their trust in Thee! This is truth, truth unclouded by doubt, for Thou lovest them that love Thee, nor dost Thou ever abandon such as hope in Thee. Thy beloved daughter sought Thee in the simplicity of her heart and, in truth, she found Thee. She hoped in Thee and Thou didst not forsake her. Nay, she obtained more than she ever expected from Thee."[1]

We will weary the reader with no further quotations, since the above will sufficiently testify to our saint's eloquence, and will doubtless suffice to kindle the wish for a closer acquaintance with the preacher's style and method. Thus we shall instinctively be led to inquire whether there

[1] *S. Bern. op.*, Vol. I, p. 307 *et seq.* This same passage recurs in another sermon, Vol. II, p. 432 *et seq.*

be no means of procuring this gold unalloyed, whether there be no possibility of reviving St. Bernardine's sermons in the form in which they were delivered in the thoroughfares of Italian cities, instead of only in the version emanating from the seclusion of his cell.

V

Of the sermons handed down to us by the Middle Ages a number owe their preservation not to the preacher himself, but to a member of his audience, who would appear armed with a tablet or a notebook, carrying sometimes an inkstand at his girdle—a familiar figure on the miniatures and MSS. of the period. In this way several works of St. Bonaventure[1] and various sermons of Gerson[2] and of Savonarola[3] have been bequeathed to posterity. Such records emanating, as a rule, from the pen of unknown persons are, it is true, incapable of inspiring us with complete confidence and are necessarily unequal in value. Thus the scribe will occasionally substitute an *etc.* for any further development of the subject that may appear to him superfluous, or that he has been unable to catch, and the recorder

[1] See the *Opera omnia S. Bonaventuræ*, edited by the Franciscan Fathers of Quaracchi, Vol. V, containing the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, and the treatise *De Septem donis Spiritus Sancti*.

[2] Bourret, *Essai critique et historique sur les sermons français de Gerson*, pp. 26, 161.

[3] Villari. See, for instance, the discourse on the way of obtaining a happy death, held by Savonarola on 2 November, 1496, and recorded by one of his hearers, who tells us that he wrote it *dalla voce del Padre mentre che predicava*.

of Savonarola's sermons, with pathetic frankness, owns to having been so overcome by emotion that the tears intercepted the flow of his pen. While some, possessing a knowledge of Latin, give us a classical version of the discourses delivered in Italian, French or German, the majority employ the tongue used by the preacher, and, though occasionally their efforts seem to have been confined to the production of a more or less dry analytical summary, yet at other times they undoubtedly aim at giving us the discourse as far as may be in its entirety.

A custom so generally in vogue could not, then, be omitted in the case of our saint, and MSS. of several of his sermons, mostly recorded in the vernacular, are to be found in the recesses of Italian libraries, particularly in Florence.[1] Although Père de la Haye, in his anxiety to furnish the reader with a reliable and faithful account of Bernardine's dogmatic theology, has discarded all reference to these humble sources,[2] yet it is precisely from such documents as these that the historian is able to form an idea of the popular preaching of the day, of the preacher and of his mode of address. We have already had occasion to draw the reader's attention to the most noteworthy of these records, that, namely, of the forty-five sermons delivered by Bernardine at

[1] Professor Orazio Bacci announces a *Bibliografia de' codici e delle stampe delle prediche volgari di Santo Bernardino* to be in course of preparation by him.

[2] All the same Père de la Haye himself finds room in his edition for a set of sermons thus popularly recorded (Vol. III, p. 168 *et seq.*), namely the so-called *Seraphic* Lent, preached at Padua, which we shall have occasion to refer to hereafter.

Siena in the summer of 1427, on his return from Rome. In the "prologue" hereto we are told how, in the course of this mission, "God inspired" a certain citizen, Benedetto by name, a fuller by trade, a married family man, more virtuous than wealthy, to temporarily abandon his work in order to record each sermon word for word (*de verbo ad verbum*), letting no word, however slight, that should pass those saintly lips go unrecorded (*non lassando una minima paroluza di quelle che uscivano di quella santa bocca che lui non scrivisse*). It is described, moreover, how Benedetto took notes with a style on wax tablets, going back to his shop as soon as the discourse was ended in order to transcribe it on parchment. Although the original MS. of Benedetto's work is no longer extant, yet four very ancient copies of the same are in existence, three of which, preserved in the library at Siena, date from a couple of years only after the saint's death, while the fourth, now at Palermo, is of the year 1443, a twelvemonth prior to St. Bernardine's death. So far back as 1820 the Rev. Luigi de Angelis, procurator of the library of Siena, drew attention to the value of the Sienese records,[1] parts of which were published by Milanesi in the year 1863,[2] some extracts, by Zambrini, in 1868,[3] while the distinguished Sienese, Luciano Banchi, finally,

[1] *Sopra un codice cartaceo del secolo XV, scritto la prima volta in cera, e su l'arte antichissima di scrivere in cera con pari prestezza del parlare, Osservazioni critiche dell' Ab.*, Luigi de Angelis. (Colle, 1820.)

[2] *Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino, per la prima volta messe in luce.* (Siena, 1852.)

[3] *Zambrini, Novellette, Esempi morali e Apologhi di San Bernardino da Siena.* (Bologna, 1868.)

between the years 1880 and 1888, brought out a three-volume edition of all the forty-five sermons.[1]

Although it were going too far to take Benedetto's literal fulfilment of the statement in the "prologue" of his having recorded *de verbo ad verbum* for granted, and while we are struck by certain obscurities, hesitations and omissions, which it would be unfair to lay exclusively to the preacher's charge; nevertheless, this record is far more exact than the majority of medieval productions of similar type that have been handed down to us. It is, indeed, here apparent at a glance that we have before us no mere epitome of a discourse, but the discourse itself. Material proof of this is amply afforded by the amount of space covered by each separate sermon, of which the average occupy thirty, while a few number up to fifty, closely-printed pages—a marked increase in length over those edited by Père de la Haye.[2]

Since the sermons contained in the two latter volumes are as a rule longer than those in the first, and as it is hard to imagine the preacher lengthening his sermons towards the close of the mission, it only remains for us to conclude the scribe's pen to have grown more able by dint of practice to

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino da Siena dette nella piazza del Campo l'Anno MCCCXXVII, ora primamente, edite da* Luciano Banchi. (Siena, 1880, 1884, 1888.) To this work we have already had several times occasion to refer.

[2] Cf., for instance, two discourses on the Nativity of Our Lady, one of which occurs in the *Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 239 *et seq.*, the other in the Latin works, Vol. IV, p. 93. While both run along the same lines and are marked by the same divisions and subdivisions, the former is at least double the length of the latter.

keep pace with the speaker's voice. The peculiar charm and accent, as well as the entirely individual ring of the style, go a long way, moreover, to testify to the genuine character of the record. There are, indeed, things in this production that could by no conceivable manner of means have sprung from the brain of a common scribe. Nay, Italian literary critics have gone so far as to pronounce these *prediche volgari* "perfect specimens of the pure and noble Sienese type of literature, gems of graphic, descriptive, discursive and oratorical prose," and in view of "the exuberance, vitality and wonderful variety" of his style, have unhesitatingly placed our author in the foremost rank of the prose writers of the *quattrocento*.[1]

Benedetto's efforts at producing a literal record are obvious, for, not content with accurately reporting the general drift of the argument, he makes a note of the smallest digressions in the course of the sermon, whether due to outward events or to a play of the preacher's fancy. Such are the speaker's allusions to the inattention, distraction or drowsiness manifest, here and there, among his audience, as, for instance: "I see two women sleeping side by side in such wise as to form each one a pillow for the other. I cannot endure this sight, being of the same race as the misers who, on beholding spilled wine, immediately exclaim:

[1] Cf. especially an interesting lecture by Professor Orazio Bacci on the *Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino* (Conferenze della commissione senese di storia patria. Siena, 1895). Cf. also d'Ancona and Bacci's joint *Manuale di letteratura italiana*.

'Alas! what a waste; for not of this do the fowls drink!'"[1] At another time he suddenly breaks off to tell those who are too far off to come nearer,[2] or to recall such as seem about to fly before the end of the sermon. "Stay where you are, ladies," he says to them, "and do not go away! How now? Let not one of you stir! . . . . Oh! what a bad sign! What a bad sign is this! In the same way was my sermon interrupted the other day, and yet I would sacrifice three pounds of blood rather than have my discourse broken into. I will now conclude; so hearken to the conclusion."[3] Another time we find him reproaching the female part of the audience with the noise they made during the Mass preceding the sermon, and exclaiming: "Oh women, what shame should be yours! for while I am saying Mass you make such a row that I am reminded of the chatter of geese. What a confusion of voices! One calling Jane, another Catherine, another Francis! Oh! what fervent devotion do you not display during Mass! . . . Do you not recall the solemn fact that, here in this very place, the

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 64.; cf. also Vol. I, pp. 77, 187; Vol. II, p. 389; Vol. III, pp. 56, 442. Such an address to sleepers was common among preachers in the Middle Ages. Cardinal Jacques de Vitry tells us how he one day captivated the attention of a whole multitude by exclaiming: "He who is dozing there in that corner will not hear the secret I am about to unfold." On another occasion he said: "Now do you wish me to describe to you a modest woman? I will speak to you of that old thing whom I see asleep! . . . For the love of God! if some one carries a pin about him, let him arouse her. They who doze during a sermon take good care not to fall asleep at table." (*Leccoy de la Marche, La chaire française au Moyen Âge*, p. 214.)

[2] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 110.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 388. Cf., likewise, Vol. II, p. 135.

sacrifice of the glorious body of Christ, the Son of God, is being offered for your salvation, and that you ought to keep quiet, and not even say *hush!* Behold my lady 'Pigara' trying to gain a seat in front of my lady 'Sollicita.' Let this behaviour cease. Take your seats on arriving and let no one pass in front of you."[1] He exhorts them, moreover, not to come before daybreak in hopes of getting good places, for, says he, "after thus passing a bad night, you will doze during the sermon, and the space is large enough for every one, who comes at the sound of the bell, to procure himself a good seat."[2] On another occasion we find him scolding children for playing at ball,[3] and other persons for making a noise on the square. "You over there, by the fountain, go further off to sell your wares! Do you not hear what I say, you over by the fountain yonder?"[4] Another time he calls on the people to chase away a dog,[5] stopping abruptly as the clock strikes.[6] He also assures his audience of the benefits derived by his health from the consolations they afford him,[7] telling them how, "after preaching, he weighed a pound more than before."[8] The quaint simplicity characterizing some of his confidences on

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, pp. 109, 110.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 136.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 405.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 270. This fountain on the Piazza del Campo is the celebrated Fontegaia, the work of Giacomo della Quercia, completed some years previously, in 1419. Cf. also Vol. II, pp. 248, 271.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 405.
[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. III. p. 305. [7] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 260.
[8] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 326; cf. also Vol. II, p. 389.

this subject would, indeed, suffice to make a modern assembly smile. Thus, "Yesterday," he says at the beginning of his fourth sermon, "I was dead, and to-day I am alive. I thought I should be unable to preach on account of the severe ailment oppressing me. Wherefore I sought relief in a strong aperient."[1] When his listeners seemed to fear a shower of rain, he would reassure them by saying: "The cloud has passed by."[2] Elsewhere the sermon is brought to an abrupt close and the record contains a remark of the following kind: "At this moment, rain began to fall and the preacher ceased speaking."[3] At other times, however, he seeks to make them share his exultation over the beauty of the weather, exclaiming: "Oh women, what think you of such weather for preaching? As for me, it strikes me as exquisite, as a dainty morsel snatched from the devil, for there is neither rain, nor frost, nor heat, nor wind. It is a pleasure to spite the devil."[4] With persevering minuteness, the recorder notes down the deliberate way in which the preacher repeats his words while waiting for the people's attention to be aroused.[5] Indeed, the very inflexions and accentuations of his voice[6] seem to have sprung on to paper, and even his dramatic gesticulation seems recalled to life.[7]

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 89. The actual quotation is of a still more realistic turn: "*Io ebbi una purgazione tanto grande, che io so' mosso xxiiii volte a qua.*" On one occasion, when St. Vincent Ferrer was hoarse, he made this ailment the subject of his discourse. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 220.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 279; Vol. II, p. 20.

[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 326.

[5] *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 270. [6] *Ibid*, Vol. II, pp. 12, 228, 414; Vol. III, p. 150.

[7] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 154; Vol. II, p. 70; Vol. III, p. 365.

As it seems highly improbable that so minute and detailed a report was taken down in ordinary character, we are led to accredit Benedetto with the knowledge of a system of shorthand which, though doubtless imperfect in form compared to its modern counterpart, was known to the world in all ages, being especially widespread in the Middle Ages.[1] Scribes habitually resorted to phonography from a wish to economize either in parchment or time, since rapidity was of paramount importance when recording a professor's lecture or a preacher's sermon. The same custom likewise prevailed with the authors themselves, several of whom, amongst others St. Thomas Aquinas,[2] employed abbreviations, sometimes hard to make out. As regards Benedetto in particular, however, we only know that he made use of a style and of wax tablets.[3]

Even with the help of phonography, however, it still remains a matter of surprise how a single tradesman could accomplish the task of taking down of a morning verbatim

[1] Cf. on this subject Maurice Prou's *Manuel de paléographie latine et française, du sixième au dix-septième siècle, suivi d'un Dictionnaire des abréviations* (1890).

[2] This is the case with the obviously autograph MS. of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, edited by Ucelli (Romæ, *Typographia polyglotta, S.C. de Propaganda fide*, 1878). As a frontispiece to this edition is the facsimile of one of the pages of this MS.

[3] These tablets, much used in classical times, had not entirely disappeared during the Middle Ages. They were, indeed, employed in some French convents up to the eighteenth century. Cf. on this subject the already mentioned treatise of the Rev. Luigi de Angelis: *Osservazioni critiche sopra un codice cartaceo del secole XV e su l'arte antichissima di scrivere in cera con pari prestezza del parlare.*

notes of a discourse lasting several hours, and of, hereupon, transcribing them, in the afternoon, on paper on forty-five consecutive days. In addition to which, the exact record of this maze of somewhat intricate theology, with its divisions and subdivisions, with its mass of Latin quotations from the Scriptures or the Fathers, certainly supposes in the reporter a literary education of the kind enjoyed by few fullers. It is true that at that time in democratic Italy the working classes were possessed of a much higher degree of culture than that distinguishing them nowadays. In Siena it was, moreover, customary for noblemen to have their names enrolled on the list of gildsmen from political motives, in order, by so doing, to escape the decrees of banishment directed against the upper classes, and for several reasons Benedetto has been supposed to have been amongst the number.[1] Another and not improbable supposition is that the preacher himself came to the scribe's aid, since, knowing that his sermons were to be recorded, he would naturally have taken interest in the work, as is plainly shown by various passages wherein he calls on "him who writes" to pay heed to some specially intricate argument, complicated grouping, or Biblical quotation.[2] On one particular occasion, indeed, we find him repeating an exceptionally lengthy text twice over for the benefit of "him who writes."[3]

[1] Cf. the *Osservazioni* above quoted by the Rev. Luigi del Angelis.
[2] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 164; Vol. II, pp. 35, 241, 275.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 257.

Anyhow, the work is sufficiently remarkable to have earned, at the time of its appearance, the epithet of *cosa miracolosa*, conferred upon it in the prologue.

VI

The authenticity of the sermons recorded by Benedetto may thus be unhesitatingly affirmed. The record is, indeed, replete with allusions to well-known incidents in the saint's life, such as to the singular coincidence of his birth, assumption of the habit and religious profession having all taken place on the feast of Our Lady's Nativity;[1] to various of his more renowned discourses, particularly to that which led to the suppression of gladiatorial fights at Perugia;[2] to his late journey to Rome and to the attacks levelled on his propagation of the devotion to the holy name;[3] as well as to his declining the bishopric of Siena.[4] And several of these sermons bear, besides, striking resemblance, in subject, matter and form, as well as in structure, Biblical quotations and argument, to those composed in Latin by our saint himself. This may specially be applied to certain discourses on factious discord, the follies of fashion, and on various feasts of Our Lady,[5]

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 240.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 98.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 97, 285, 349.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 69, 219.
[5] Cf., for instance, the first sermon of the *Prediche Volgari* on the Assumption (Vol. I, p. 7 *et seq.*) with the discourse *De Assumptione B. V. Mariæ* and that *De Exaltatione B. Virginis in gloriâ* (*Sancti Bernardini Senensis Opera*, edited by Père de la Haye, Vol. IV, p. 125 *et seq.*, p. 132 *et seq.*). Cf. also the sermon in the *Prediche Volgari* on the Nativity (Vol. II, p. 239 *et seq.*) and those on the Annunciation (Vol. II, p. 389 *et seq.*, and p. 430 *et seq.*) with the discourses on the same theme published by Père de la Haye (Vol. IV, p. 93 *et seq.*; p. 98 *et seq.*; Vol. II, p. 316 *et seq.*)

while still more conclusive evidence is afforded by repetition of ideas too quaintly original to have occurred simultaneously to several minds.[1]

The author of the Latin sermons and the preacher of those in the vernacular is, then, clearly one and the same person, though the discourses themselves are distinct, both in matter and form. They are, indeed, vastly dissimilar. True, even on the Sienese market-place, Bernardine remains true to that scholastic method, to those divisions and subdivisions wherein he so excelled on paper in the quietude of his cell, and wherein he seems to have sought, as it were, an entrenchment from the impetuosities of extempore eloquence; whence his introduction often consists of an indication and enumeration of the divisions marking the discourse, to which he recurs at every transition as well as in his peroration.[2] Nevertheless, within the pale of these self-imposed restrictions, the preacher, allowing himself free play, warms to his subject, so that, instead of the elaborate, somewhat dry mode of argument proper to the written discourses, we are here confronted with a spontaneous, living voice, with a unique versatility of style, as the preacher passes from the homely to the impassioned,

[1] As, for example, when the preacher assures us that the water used by a woman for washing her hands was observed by him to be less dirty than that employed by a man for the same purpose, a remark contained both in the *Prediche Volgari* (Vol. II, p. 109) and in one of the *Sermones* of de la Haye's edition (Vol. I, p. 243), although quoted in each case to a different end.

[2] The scribe often dispenses with a detailed record of such repetitions, confining himself to a mere indication of the same. Cf., for instance, *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, pp. 238, 306; Vol. II, p. 387.

from satire to tenderness, from the joyful to the pathetic. We seem, indeed, to catch the smile on his lips or the break in his voice, to seize his very interjections, exclamations, queries and replies, as this dramatic scene, all life and movement, *alla gagliardoza*, as he himself characterizes it, rises up before us. Backwards and forwards surges the torrent of his eloquence, prone to repetition and to insistence on ideas as yet but ill digested by his audience, seizing on any passing inspiration or breaking off to bestow a word of counsel, and, thereupon finding himself far removed from his subject, reverting to the same with an "*A casa, torniamo a casa.*"

And yet Bernardine was by no means entirely under the dominion of his emotional faculty, but took his clue from what he knew either by past experience or by sudden intuition to be the needs of his audience. His eye is obviously ever upon them, divining their frame of mind from their attitude, so as to discover whether they be distracted, touched, obdurate or convinced, ever framing his discourse accordingly. Thus he says: "It is easy for me to tell by certain symptoms when you are listening against the grain, for you then either raise your hand or shake your head or else turn round."[1] In order to rivet their attention and place himself more directly in touch with them, moreover, we find him making them copy his gestures,[2] or urging them to make a knot either in a string or in some part

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 187.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 278, 279.

of their dress in order to remind them again at home of certain passages in the sermon particularly applicable to themselves.[1] In a word, when writing in the solitude of his cell, Bernardine produced a monologue, which became, when preaching on the *Piazza* to the assembled multitude, a dialogue.

In order to ensure his being readily understood, he is careful to employ only the simplest and most popular language; whence the *Prediche Volgari* are of much value in the eyes of the philologist as specimens of the ancient Sienese dialect.[2] This was naturally familiar to Bernardine, born as he was on Sienese territory; but in other parts of Italy we find him adapting himself likewise to the popular parlance. "When I go about preaching from place to place," he tells us, "I no sooner arrive at a particular spot, than I diligently strive to acquire the popular dialect. Thus I have laboured, and ended by speaking to people on a variety of topics in their own tongue."[3] And it was with the same object in view that he adopted a style accessible and appropriate to the multitude, interlarded with popular dicta, bywords and proverbs. Thus, when developing and laying stress on an abstract point in morals, instead of in-

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 2.

[2] This dialect is not always easy to understand, especially for a foreigner. Milanesi had, indeed, affixed a vocabulary to explain the meaning of any obscure local terms occurring in the course of the ten *Prediche* edited by him. It was Banchi's intention, stated in the preface to his complete edition of the *Prediche Volgari*, to still further amplify this vocabulary, but death prevented his doing so.

[3] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. II, p. 229.

dulging in vague metaphor, we find him illustrating his meaning with the aid of similes and parables borrowed from his audience's daily routine, from their domestic life, from the kitchen, from children's games, trades, nature, plants, stones, and particularly from the animal kingdom. Such imagery occurs, indeed, on well-nigh every page, being sometimes confined to a few words, and at other times more amply developed, so as to form little brightly coloured miniatures, both telling and picturesque.[1] This was a habit with medieval preachers, whose sermons abound with allusions to natural history of a sometimes very fantastic kind, a clue to which science was afforded them by a perusal of the various natural history manuals of the time.

"The properties of the visible and natural world," to quote the words of Hugh of Saint Victor, in the twelfth century, "are identical in number with the applications to the inner life of the soul to be derived therefrom." Nor was this method extinct, even in the sixteenth century, as we see by the works of St. Francis of Sales, upon which it undoubtedly confers an additional charm.

[1] So frequent are these parables and similes, that it is hard to find particular examples. We may, however, as well refer the reader to the account, in the course of the first volume, of the reception afforded to the stray dog by the rest of the canine tribe who are slaking their thirst (p. 151); of the mother who smears her breasts over with gall so as to wean her child (p. 198); of the fly which falls into the greedy husband's soup (p. 199); of the armourer polishing his armour (p. 352); and of the child fallen into the mire and rescued by its mother (p. 355), etc. See also Vol. III, p. 296, the account of the sower who thinks to chase away the crows by making a dinning with a crossbow in his hand.

From time to time we also find the preacher interweaving his discourse, for the benefit of his hearers, with short tales and fables[1] standing in somewhat loose connexion to the thread of the argument, and obviously intended by the preacher as a means of resting and refreshing his audience during a sermon which lasted for several hours. And how he tries to captivate their wayward or wandering attention by solemnly ushering in his tale! "I am going to give you a most beautiful fable," he says, "*un bellissimo esempio* (as such moral illustrations were then called). Listen with all your might, for it is sure to please you."[2] Herein Bernardine was likewise only following a usage prevalent in his as in every age. For were not Demosthenes and Demadus wont to rivet Athenian attention by an account of the dispute over the donkey's shadow, or of Ceres' voyage with the eel and the swallow? These "examples" were, however, exceptionally in favour during the Middle Ages.[3] And they were indiscriminately borrowed from ancient classical authors, from legends of the saints, from chronicles and popular tales, and from the fables then most in vogue. With the catholicity characteristic of the age, moreover, the identical illustrations were in use in the pulpit throughout Christen-

[1] Zambrini published in 1878 a record of eighteen *novellette*, *Esempi morali e Apologhi*, derived from our saint's Sienese sermons.

[2] Cf. *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, pp. 172, 234, 349; Vol. II, p. 29.

[3] "The sword whetted on the stone of argument," said a celebrated preacher of the day, Jacques de Vitry, "has no power over the laity, and to a knowledge of the Scriptures, without which they can make no headway, preachers should furthermore add light and yet edifying examples. They who blame this method of preaching are ignorant of the fruits resulting therefrom."

dom, various treasuries of the same having been compiled and placed at every preacher's disposal.[1]

Our saint doubtless profited hereby, as a source of many of his "examples," some of which, indeed, are to be found in the pages of modern fabulists and story-tellers. For is not his tale of the "Fox and the Wolf"[2] well-nigh identical with La Fontaine's fable, as is likewise, with some variations, the account of the monk, the boy and the donkey,[3] with that of "The Miller, his Son and the Ass"? Again, in the lion assembling the animal kingdom in order to read them a lesson in monastic fashion, we have a counterpart of the story of the "Beasts stricken by the Plague," of the ass being beaten and hounded like a thief, and of the sheep labelled a hypocrite worthy of severe chastisement before it had so much as opened its mouth, while the fox and the wolf are exonerated from blame for following their natural instincts.[4] Then there is also the fable of the ass that was the joint property of three farms, which introduces us to three farmers who have decided to keep a donkey in a small hut on the road to their mill in order to help, by turns, to carry the corn. The first of the three who employed the donkey let it graze in the plot of grass surrounding the mill while the corn was being ground, in consequence of which, the grass being scarce, it was speedily

[1] The *Société des anciens textes Français* published in 1889 a treasury of the kind, entitled *Les contes moralisés de Nicole Bozon*, a Minorite, living in England during the fourteenth century.

[2] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 319.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 172. [4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 29.

devoured. On the following day, when the second farmer's turn came, thinking that the animal had had enough fodder on the preceding day, he led it back to the shed without giving it any food. The next day the third miller, holding an exaggerated estimate of the strength of a beast that belonged to several persons, gave it a still heavier load to carry, and, when it became exhausted, instead of feeding it, gave it a thorough good hiding until, on the fourth day, the poor animal expired.[1] On another occasion the preacher treats us to the tale of the widow longing to marry again, but deterred therefrom by fear of what may be said of her, and who, in order to test public opinion on the subject, hits on the device of skinning a horse, telling her servant to lead it through the town and to note the remarks of the passers-by. The servant soon returns with the news that an eager crowd had gathered to inquire "what this singular spectacle might mean." And the following day saw the same experiment renewed with an equally skinned horse, but this time the excitement was visibly less. Then said the widow to herself: "Oh! I can certainly marry again, for after two or three days' gossip they will tire of the topic."[2] Space will not permit us to retail the story of the hermit who holds aloof from the sermon,[3] of the thief who disguises himself as a pig in order to steal some flour at night,[4] or of the madman who fights with his own shadow,[5]

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. III, p. 196.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 174.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 110.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol, I, p. 234.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 216,

etc., etc. While sometimes the preacher makes short work of these narratives, at other times he seems to delight in putting his fictitious personages into high relief and in making them converse, displaying in every case a charming and never-ending fund of lively good humour, characteristic of good story-tellers in general and of Boccaccio's compatriots in particular.

This mode of popular preaching has suffered at the hands of certain critics, who were apparently surprised at the discovery that medieval monks, preaching in the open marketplace to a rude unlettered crowd, were wont to employ a tone and language foreign to the courtly prelates who thronged Versailles in the reign of Louis XIV—a wonderment surely betokening a limited sense of the expediency of time and place! For if we hold the chief merit of oratory to consist in its perfect harmony with the needs of the audience and measure its excellence by the force of its appeal, then surely our verdict will be favourable to this popular mode of sermonizing. For is it not a fact that never has sacred eloquence attained so widespread an influence as at this time, when it resorted to those very methods at which some would now feign take scandal? Doubtless this, as everything else, was open to abuse at the hands of certain preachers with whom familiarity had degenerated in coarseness, geniality and humour into buffoonery and harlequinade, and who had repeatedly incurred the censure of their contemporaries as well as

ecclesiastical reprimand in consequence.[1] But does the abuse of a method warrant its condemnation? No blame at any rate attaches to St. Bernardine's preaching in this respect. Animated by no vulgar wish to entertain his audience, he is bent on enlivening them only with a view to gaining their souls. And if, here and there, expressions and images occur of a realism quaint enough to jar on our more refined and sensitive taste,[2] yet such blemishes are rare, while striking, as a rule, is the charm and purity conveyed by this popular language. We are, indeed, confronted at every turn by the exquisite candour characteristic of sanctity, by the distinction of a man of good birth, as well as by the polished elegance of one by no means external to the movement of the Renaissance.

These qualities suffice of themselves to render Bernardine's figure unique among the popular preachers of the day. A comparison of his method with that of another celebrated Minorite preacher, Oliver Maillard, who flourished in France not long after our saint's death, will suffice to illustrate our meaning.[3] Hailed by his compatriots as "a second Bernardine of Siena," Maillard also

[1] Dante, in the thirteenth century, already complains of the "fables given in the pulpit," adding "nowadays preaching consists of puns and buffoonery, and it suffices to elicit a laugh from the audience in order to puff out the cowl with pride" (*Paradiso*, c. xxix, v. 103–20). In the sixteenth century the Council of Sens, in 1528, renewed the prohibition to "cause bursts of laughter after the manner of shameless buffoons by means of absurd stories, and old wives' tales."

[2] Cf., for instance, *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 154; Vol. II, pp. 15, 36, 138.

[3] Cf. Abbe Samouillan's *Olivier Maillard, sa prédication et son temps.*

was animated by untiring zeal, and was ever on the move attracting immense multitudes, treating the same subjects and inveighing against the same vices as our saint. Like Bernardine also, he displays, within the field of scholastic theology, the force of an able and ingenious moralist, of a dramatic story-teller and fabulist, but his mind is coarser and more plebeian, his satire more virulent, his humour more explosive. His sermons are, indeed, tarnished with a vulgarity, frivolity, and licence approaching that of the medieval fables and mysteries, while the author himself would brook comparison in some respects at least with his compatriot and contemporary Villon. His tirades against the iniquities of those in authority, moreover, exhibit something of the well-nigh revolutionary spirit that animated the pulpit in the days of the Bourguignons and Armagnacs and which foreshadowed the turbulent days of the League. Thus Bernardine, with his gentle and lovable nature, stands towards Maillard like the bleak clime of the north to the mild Tuscan sky.

VII

There is no trace of any method presiding over the grouping of the forty-five sermons contained in Banchi's three-volume edition. On the contrary, we are there met by a variety of discourses either on the same or on different themes, grouped either consecutively or apart, their order being occasioned solely by the needs of the people of Siena or suggested by an impulse of the preacher, whose long

practice enabled him to treat any chance subject at will. Sometimes we find him pursuing the same theme on several consecutive days, or more than once recurring to it during the course of the same mission. Diversity of subject, on the other hand, appeared to him an excellent means of captivating his audience, and, in the midst of a discourse, he will sometimes break off to indulge in an account of the themes he proposes for the following days.[1]

His first sermon, to which we have already had occasion to refer, was preached on the 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption. He had, indeed, meant to reserve himself for the Sunday following, but was obliged to cede to the entreaties of the town officials, who besought him not to disappoint the people, as they were most anxious to hear him.[2] Fortunately, there could be no more familiar or more inspiring topic than that of the Assumption to a young friar who in early youth had, as we have seen, taken the Madonna of Porta Camollia to his heart, and to whom it was no difficulty to improvise a discourse on that subject.[3] His biographers assure us that when preaching on Our Lady his countenance would beam like an angel's, and relate how, while dwelling one day at Aquila on the twelve stars composing her heavenly crown, a star suddenly appeared shining over his head. Although the structure of this first Sienese sermon, the divisions and enumerations with which it

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 236; Vol. II, pp. 408, 409; Vol. III, pp. 236, 372.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 28. [3] Cf. above, p. 7 *et seq.*

abounds, and the various allegories occurring therein, such as that of the five stones in the Blessed Virgin's crown,[1] are somewhat repellent to the modern reader, yet it is by no means lacking in inspiration, colour and life which assert themselves, and tend to transform a dry scholastic dissertation into an impassioned prayer, a mystic contemplation, and a song of triumph. Such, for instance, is the description of Mary's response to the call, *Veni de Libano, Sponsa mea*, and of her swift ascent from earth to heaven as, passing the moon, Mercury, Venus and the sun on her way, without tarrying, she mounts radiant with joy and glory to the sphere of the crystalline and empyrean heavens. "As in spring the earth is covered with flowers and perfumes, so Mary is surrounded by angels, apostles, martyrs and confessors, all of whom encircle and envelop her with sweet odours and canticles. It seems to me as though one could in spirit gaze upon her as she mounts to glory, hailed by the saints with such joy, with such sweet canticles and such great rejoicing that the mere recollection thereof is a delight. . . . She is surrounded by a host of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, of apostles and patriarchs, of virgins and martyrs, singing and rejoicing and dancing in a circle, like you see it depicted close by over the Porta Camollia."

Mary, however, will not tarry even among the saints, since God Himself beckons to her.

"Behold Mary ascending to the eternal Father, her soul

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 29 *et seq.*

enriched by all imaginable beauties of virtue. For they wait on Mary, all the virtues that one chooses to name, each one in a lower or in a higher place according to its rank, one and all longing to attain to the supreme goodness of God, the source whence they spring to inundate us. And Mary, thus escorted, ascends with great glee and high resolve burning with the desire to be united to the Father's uncreated divinity. And the Father, together with the two other divine Persons, awaits her with a joy and a delight which no human tongue can express. The Canticle of Canticles, indeed, conveys but a dim impression of those words of the Father: *Veni in hortum meuum, soror, sponsa; messui myrram meam cum aromatibus meis: comedi favum cum melle meo: bibi vinum meum cum lacte meo.*"

Hereupon God the Father calls upon Mary to look upon "her sweet Son" (*dolce Figliuolo*) united to the Godhead.

"What joy can exceed that of Mary! She rejoices in God, beholds, contemplates and possesses Him, seeing herself reflected in her Child united to the Godhead. In her beloved Son, she gazes on her own flesh and blood, nourished by her milk, conceived and born in her virginal womb. She beholds the same person with whom she passed thirty-two years of this life, that flesh which endured such cruel pangs on the wood of the cross, on behalf of such souls as would follow his gospel teaching; and the sight fills Mary with such rapture, with such consolation, and with such triumphant joy, that her eyes are never weary of gazing on her Son."

And again:

"What is the cause of the rejoicings heard in the courts of heaven? They are, on occasion of the espousals of Mary, the spouse of God Himself; whence, ever since her Assumption into heaven, there resound dances, rejoicings and spiritual canticles without end. And to all those who are present at this marriage-feast are addressed those words of Solomon: *Venite et comedite panem meum et bibite vinum, quod miscui vobis. . . . Venite et comedite omnes et inebriamini.* All of us, moreover, are invited to these espousals. Oh women, would that I might behold you all, and myself along with you, intoxicated with the wine of the glory of life eternal."[1]

Despite the impossibility of rendering the grace, colour and freshness of the Sienese in all its pristine fervour, are not even these pallid versions an echo of Fra Angelico's paintings, of those ravishing visions beginning at that time to adorn many a cloister wall, of the angels and saints clothed in perennial youth and joy, either singing and playing upon instruments, and dancing over the flowery fields of paradise, or else paying ecstatic homage to the spotless Maiden crowned by her Son, whose countenance is aglow with tenderness divine?

One of the first subjects hereupon treated by our saint is the importance to be attached to the word of God.[2] He even goes so far as to declare that, if it came to a choice between a Sunday Mass or a sermon, it were better to miss

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 22–28. [2] Third and fourth sermons.

the former than the latter.[1] And what, he asks, would become of the Christian faith if it once ceased to be proclaimed from the pulpit? The lack of sermons he prognosticates as a sign heralding the coming of Antichrist, the dreaded event then under such constant discussion,[2] while on another occasion he dwells on his having refused a bishopric for the express purpose of devoting himself, heart and soul, to so important a mission. "During several years," he continues, "I have already borne the hardships of a missionary life, nor do I know of more acceptable fatigue. Whence I have resolved to discard all other work and to shrive neither man nor woman, devoting myself only to spreading God's word." Referring, thereupon, to all the people who came to him with an entreaty to help them out of their difficulties, to allay strife, to cause debts to be discharged, to reconcile either a father and son, or a husband and wife, or to restore order in a parish, he emphatically asserts: "Such is not my mission; my task is to preach."[3] The stirring accents in which he besought the people to attend the sermon are, then, not to be wondered at. "Oh, you who are cold and dead," he exclaims, "come to the fountain of life, and oh, woman, when you draw nigh of a morning to this well of supernatural life and doctrine and come to attend the sermon, leave neither your husband, nor brother, nor child in bed,

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 66. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 68.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 69, 70, 367-370. Cf. these passages with one of the Latin sermons of the works of St. Bernardine, Vol. III, p. 379.

but take care to wake them, that they also may go to hear that which, if they be dead, will restore them to life."[1] And yet, with the wisdom and moderation which ever tempered his zeal, this preacher, so persuaded of the efficacy of the divine word, is the first to dissuade some persons from assisting at a sermon.

"Have you a sick man at home?—Yes.—Then do you not realize the good you are doing by nursing him? Do not leave him, so as to come to the sermon. Have you young children?—Yes.—Do not neglect any of their requirements in order to assist at the sermon. Have you a husband and children, towards whom you have domestic duties to perform?—Yes.—Do not rid yourself of them for the sake of being present at the sermon; nay, I should not praise you for coming, if so be as it entailed a neglect of your home duties, for you should weigh the nature of your offerings at the altar; *che ti conviene misurare l'altare*."[2]

He abounds in good advice on the right way of assisting at a sermon, of keeping oneself awake and attentive so as to thoroughly profit thereby, clothing his words with much geniality and humour, and recurring to the use of quaint and homely similes. Thus we find him exhorting his hearers to "ruminate" on the preacher's words on their way back to their trade or their vineyard. "Follow the example of the ox," he says; "on leaving its pasture it goes on chewing and chewing the cud, and even prefers this ruminating to grazing. Do likewise when you hear the

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 75. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 42.

word of God, and chew the same so thoroughly that it will seem better to ruminate thereon even than to hear it."[1] These exhortations are interwoven with short satirical sketches, as that of the stout and stupid monk ("*tanto grosso, di quelli grossolani che era una confusione tanto era grosso*") who went into raptures over the preaching of a certain friar "whose sayings were of a subtlety to make one marvel, finer even than the thread of your infant's leading-strings." When questioned on the cause of his admiration the fat friar would at first only reply, "The friar spoke the highest and noblest truths that I have ever heard." When pressed still further, however, he said, "He was so exalted that I understood nothing," whence Bernardine infers the necessity for lucidity on the part of the preacher. *Chiarozo, chiarozo*, he would insist, so that the audience may come away enlightened and consoled, and not all *imbarbagliato*.[2] After these various pithy diversions, recurring to a grave and stirring tone, Bernardine convokes his hearers before the judgment-seat of God.

"Know that, on the day of judgment, I shall stand before the throne of God and say: Lord, I preached thy doctrine to this people, and they have acted up to my words. Since, then, oh Lord, thou didst say by the mouth of thy evangelist: *Si quis sermonem meum servaverit, mortem non habebit in æteruum* ('he who keepeth my words shall not see death for ever'); therefore, oh Lord, do thou bring these unto

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 100–8.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 59-61. See also Vol. III, p. 215.

salvation. . . . And I will likewise render testimony before God against such as have refused to obey my voice, saying: Lord, I have spoken to this people according to thy commands, but they would neither hearken to nor follow my words. And, Lord, forasmuch as thou hast said in thy Gospel: *Qui non est mecum contra me est* ('whoever is not with me is against me'), therefore, as these refused to be thine, Lord, be they overtaken by thy justice!"[1]

Slander, that vice common alike to every age and clime, must have raged furiously in Siena, since our saint devotes no less than four consecutive sermons to this subject.[2] Despite the whimsical divisions of these discourses based on the account of the dragon in the Apocalypse, our saint herein displays considerable ability as a moralist, ingenious and versatile, and one who can be practical as well as exalted. The various pitfalls of the evil tongue are subjected to piercing analysis and withering scorn, yet this sarcasm is never prompted by a futile malice, but merely by the longing to see souls redeemed from sin. His style, moreover, is full of animation, since brief sketches and tales of popular life occur to enliven the tedium of mere abstract moralizing, and are succeeded by such words of pathos as those contained in the vehement malediction of the slanderer, who goes about disseminating scandal, lies, discord and war, and who is, in fact, "the mainspring of Guelfs and Ghibellines."[3] While denouncing scandal, moreover, Bernardine

[1] *Pred. Vol.*, Vol. I, p. 87.
[2] Sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth sermons.
[3] *Pred Volg.*, Vol. I, pp. 159, 160.

takes occasion to warn such as are oppressed thereby from losing heart, since calumny is more advantageous to the soul than praise, adding:

"There is only one reason why I should like to have money.—Why, what would you do with it? Give it as a marriage-dowry for maidens?—No.—Spend it on the enrichment of churches?—No.—On prisoners?—No.—But what would you do with it, then?—I would give all of it to my slanderers. . . . Truly yes. For who, think you, would be doing most for my soul, he who blames or he who praises me? Mark well the contrast between the two, for I tell you it is as great as that between the man who drags me down from here on to the ground and him who would support and prevent me from falling."[1]

The factious discord of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, or the *parzialita*, is the recurring theme of the Sienese sermons, as indeed of all Bernardine's discourses. Recalling in what terms he had already inveighed against this crying evil in Lombardy and elsewhere,[2] he observes that the news of the rekindling of strife which had reached him on leaving Rome had alone induced his return to Siena.[3] Not content with delivering three consecutive sermons on the subject,[4] he likewise makes it the theme of several of his later discourses.[5] His tone in treating of this question is characterized by a special tragic earnestness and pathos,

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 205.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 240, 253, 264.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 69, 219.
[4] Sermons 10, 11, 12.
[5] *Ibid.*, 16, 23, 42.

and, exempt from all playful digression, is replete only with descriptions of a sombre hue and with the severest reprimand. The historian would, indeed, be able to extract a fund of valuable information from these sermons regarding the popular life of the period. They certainly serve to show the extent to which the spirit of discord had come to dominate the most ordinary events of daily life and to make one realize the depths of ferocity to which mankind had then attained. Nor, considering his remarks to be addressed to eye-witnesses of the events referred to, can the preacher be accredited with exaggeration. The reader will doubtless pardon a quotation wherein the horrors enacted in Siena since the period of his last visitation, which had occurred but two years previously, are vividly described.

"Alas! what manner of things have befallen in the space of two years! How much evil has been wrought by the two factions of Guelfs and Ghibellines! How many women have been butchered in their own homes, within their native towns! How many others have been disembowelled, and how many children massacred for the sake of being avenged on their father! How many infants have been extracted from their mother's womb, trampled upon and taken and hurled against a wall so as to crack their skulls! How much of the enemy's flesh has been sold by the butcher, just like ordinary meat, the heart being torn out and eaten raw! How many have perished by the sword and been buried on a dung-heap! Some have been

roasted and eaten, others precipitated from the top of a high tower, others flung over the bridge into the water! Many a woman has been taken and violated in presence of her father and her husband, both of whom have perished before her very eyes, nor has any one shown any pity or rested until he beheld his neighbour dead. What think you of such doings, oh women? Have I not heard of females so infuriated against the opposite party that they went so far as to put a lance into the hand of their tiny child in order that he might thus execute vengeance? Nay, I know of a woman so enraged against a female of the opposite camp that she said to her attendant: 'So and so has taken to flight and is riding pillion behind the knight who is flying with her.' Whereupon the servant followed in their track, calling out to the knight in a voice of thunder, 'Put that woman to the ground, unless you wish death to overtake you!' Whereat the knight obeyed, with the result that the one woman killed the other."[1]

The preacher here goes on to assure us that he has by no means said all, and finally, horror-struck at such a state of iniquity, ends his discourse by exclaiming, in the words of the Apocalypse, "*Væ, terræ et mari, quia descendit diabolus ad vos.*" It is, indeed, the devil whom he denounces as being at the root of all these factious machinations. Indignant, as though at some horrible sacrilege, at the sight of party emblems engraven or depicted on church walls, he exclaims, "Occasionally I have seen such figuring over the head of

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol, I, pp. 252, 253.

the crucifix and, aghast at such a spectacle, I have said to myself: Oh Lord God! Oh! Thou hast the devil hanging over thee!"[1] Thus each party action he denounces is followed by a solemn declaration that it is a "mortal sin," and "the greatest, the most defiling, and the most loathsome crime under the canopy of heaven," while he adds the assurance that he who dies in this state is doomed to go to hell: "*a casa del diavolo.*" This awful menace is, indeed, a constant refrain, striking the *parziale* each time like a thunderbolt.[2] Moreover, according to him, no Mass and no prayers may be said for the soul of a partisan who has died impenitent, nor would it be other than a mortal sin to intercede for him, since God wills his damnation. "It is as lawful," he says, "to pray for his soul as for the soul of Mahomet."[3] And he goes certainly a good bit further than we should approve in saying:

"Fellow-citizens and women! I wish you this morning to listen to a prayer I am about to make for the souls of my father, of my mother, and of my other relatives: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech thee that, if my father or mother or any one of my relations have died as an adherent of either of the two factions I have denounced, no Mass may be applied to that person's soul nor any of my prayers bring

[1] The preacher's emotion lends an audacity and force to his words not to be rendered by our more fastidious language: "*O Signore Dio, oh, tu hai il diavolo sopra di te, il quale si può dire che ti piscia in capo! Basta, basta.*" (*Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, p. 15.)

[2] *Passim*, in the afore-mentioned sermons.

[3] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, pp. 237, 238.

relief to the same. And furthermore, Lord, I entreat Thee, if one of them has remained a partisan up to the hour of his death without confessing it, let his soul fall into the hands of a thousand demons, and for him let there be no redemption.' "[1]

The more terrible were Bernardine's words on the subject of discord, so much the more ravishing were his accents on the subject of peace,[2] which, indeed, formed the theme of a whole discourse preached towards the end of the mission. In words recalling the sentiments of St. Francis of Assisi, and which, after the lapse of more than four centuries, still seem pervaded by the speaker's tearful emotion, he exclaims: "Oh, fellow-citizens, seek reconciliation with one another! (Literally, embrace one another: *rabbriacciatevi insieme.*) Let him who has been insulted forgive the injury, for the love of God, and by so doing he will prove his goodwill towards his native town. You have the example of Christ's life before you, who was always saying Peace." Nor is there any virtue he more solicitously inculcates. And again: "Fellow-citizens! I preach peace to you and exhort you to maintain peace. Oh you who are of good will, do not disobey, but walk in the way of peace for the love of Him who thus solicits you." He thereupon recalls to the mind of the Christian how everything combines, including Christ, the Church, his conscience, and unbelievers themselves, to exhort him to the maintenance of peace.

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, p. 18.

[2] Cf., on this topic, a passage from the Latin discourses quoted above, p. 154.

"Wherefore," recurring to the old refrain, "I entreat, I admonish, and I order you, on the part of God, to forgive."[1] Finally, when, by dint of entreaties, he seemed to have succeeded in touching the hearts of his hearers, he urges both men and women in proof of their goodwill, at the close of the sermon, to wend their way, the former to the cathedral,[2] the latter down the Porrione[3] to the church of St. Martin, which is, on both sides, to be regarded as a solemn avowal of a desire for universal peace and reconciliation with their enemies.[4] Then follows the peroration couched in the form of a final entreaty.

"Oh! fathers and brethren, love and embrace one another once again, and if some harm has been done you in the past, pardon the injuries you have received, for the love of God, letting hatred abide with you no longer lest you be hated by God. Love one another, proving your love by words and deeds, and by the gift of your heart, as Christ did towards those who had injured Him. You know, indeed, how, when pinned to the wood of the Cross, He showed, far from hating them, how great was His love for them. . . . Who would be so cruel and wicked as to refuse forgiveness for God's sake? . . . Citizens and women! I entreat, exhort, and order you, to the best of my ability, to cherish and maintain peace. I call on the women to help

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, pp. 377, 384.

[2] The MS. has *vescovado*, which the author takes in this instance to mean the cathedral. Cf. *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, p. 411.

[3] Name of an old street leading from the Piazza del Campo to the church of St. Martin.

[4] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 385.

me for the love of God, and I solicit the assistance of you all, both men and women, in the fatigues I have endured with such loving solicitude in order to your peace. . . . If you are reconciled with one another you will enjoy peace here below, and still more hereafter in the glory which I pray God to grant you by His merciful grace, *in sæcula sæculorum Amen.* Now, then, women; away with you and down the Porrione with a will, and let the men march bravely towards the cathedral."[1]

In another discourse wholly concerning the follies of fashion, the excess of luxury, and immodesty of apparel, the preacher pauses to consider each separate article of dress.[2] The same theme is touched upon in the course of several other sermons. According to his assurance, the pomp of the Sienese fashions far exceeded those he had seen elsewhere,[3] and we find him drawing a comparison in this respect between the Sienese and the Roman matron who, though the wife of a prince or some other grandee, thinks not to demean herself by covering her head and shoulders with a plain white woollen shawl.[4] The details into which the preacher enters on such occasions would indeed suffice to evoke the complete image of a fashionable woman or man of the world of that day, were it not for a certain amount of uncertainty as to the particular article to which he is re-

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, pp. 389, 390.
[2] Sermon XXXVII.
[3] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, p. 111.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 90.

ferring.[1] It is singular to find our saint regulating the right height for heels. "These women," he says, "pretend that I allowed them to wear slippers two fingers' breadth in height, which is the case; while others again maintain that they understood me to have said two fingers' length in height, which I did not say. I said two fingers' breadth."[2] What a graphic picture he draws of the wiles of female coquetry! How true to life is the account of the widow pining to be married again;[3] or that of the flirtation indulged in by young men and women on their exit from church![4] The reader will pardon a brief quotation.

"Have you never heard the tale of the raven who, one fine day, decked himself out in borrowed plumes? And oh! how fine he looked in such many-coloured feathers! But guess what happened! All the other birds gathered round him, and each one drew out the feather which the raven had

[1] Descriptions of the same kind occur in the Latin sermons of St. Bernardine edited by Père de la Haye, wherein he depicts a woman wearing a golden wig surmounted by a gilt coronet, over which figures a mitre of silk embroidery, likened by the indignant preacher to an inflated bladder. The headgear is further completed by combs and precious stones, of which some hang as pendants over the forehead. The temples are encircled by hoops of gold serving to give breadth to a narrow forehead, while costly earrings are also worn. An artificial curve is lent to the eyebrows in order to bring the ebony hue artfully bestowed upon them into relief. Lost teeth have been replaced by ivory ones, while such as are decayed are restored to their primitive spotless state. A fine-edged glass has succeeded in removing down too fine for the razor, while the skin is softened by the application of cosmetics. (Vol. I, Sermon XLIV, *contra mundanas vanitates et pompas*, also Sermon XLII, *contra fucatas et capillos adulterinos portantes*.)

[2] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 356. [3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 197–9.

[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 212.

stolen from him until he became featherless. Oh woman! adorned with so many things that are not your own, if the wool you wear were restored to the sheep, the silk to the worm that spun it, and your wig to the dead people to whom it once belonged, whilst the horse-hairs you use were given back to the horses, if all the things you have purloined for your adornment were, in fact, restored to their rightful owners, oh! how destitute would you be! You would have fewer ornaments and encumbrances than you now possess, and you would no longer commit so many sins."

And the woman who feigns to be different in society from what she really is he thus upbraids:

"Have you not heard that an innkeeper keeps two different sorts of wine to sell, the one of superior quality to the other? The better sort he reserves for his friends and for old customers, while the inferior he gives to fools. Now the vain woman acts in like manner, selling the best wine in front of the bishop's palace or in the cathedral to her admirers, and bestowing the other upon her fool of a husband. On her way to church she appears adorned, painted and festooned with flowers, as though she were *my lady Smiraldina*, and at home she behaves like a mere silly wench. Surely such conduct ought to make you blush. . . . It is in your own room with your husband that you should appear to the best advantage, not before the bishop's palace, among a crowd of people. Does it not sometimes

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 191.

seem as though you wished to mimic the lion out of doors and the sheep within?"[1]

He wields the weapon of satire against the follies of fashion, laughing at women for bedecking their heads "one with battlements, another with a citadel, and a third with a solitary spire like that one in front of me," pointing towards the great tower of the *Palazzo pubblico*. "Behold," he exclaims, "the battlements from which wave the devil's standards." And he rebukes the tittering audience by telling them "not to laugh, since they have rather cause to weep."[2] On another occasion, when inveighing against the wearing of "sleeves of such vast dimensions that they would suffice for two coats," he exclaims: "Hallo! do not smile, for the devil must likewise smile thereat. If the seraphim of God have two wings, so also have the seraphim of the devil, to which you, with your sleeves, do of a truth belong."[3] Far from such exhibitions of vanity affording him food for merriment, our saint denounces them with somewhat excessive rigorism as "mortal sins."[4] His satire is prone to flash out into indignation as he cries out to the mother who arrays her daughter like a courtesan: "Are you not ashamed? . . . Oh! if I were your husband I would give you such kicks and blows as you would not soon forget. . . . *O frate Mazica, frate Bastone*,[5] come to

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 206. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 306.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 207, 208.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 186, 193, 204, *passim*.
[5] Literally, "Brother cudgel, brother rod," i.e. Bernardine's habitual mode of designating the various forms of chastisement inflicted by God upon evil-doers.

punish the sins of such as wish to appear like courtesans."[1] He reverts not infrequently to the simile of the innkeeper's wine.

"How do you know where wine is to be had? By the sign-board. And how do you recognize an inn? Likewise by the sign-board. Having seen the sign-board you go to the tavern to drink wine, saying to the hostler, Give me some wine—do you not? Now if some one were to go up to a woman whose clothes and head-dress seem alike to betray the prostitute in the same way as he would ask for wine of an hostler, what, think you, would be the result?"[2]

The very thought of the existence of misery unappeased living alongside so much luxury suffices to fan his indignation into flame. To the woman who fills her coffers and wardrobes with fine clothes while the poor are perishing with cold, he exclaims: "What, think you, will be the outcry of those in misery against you before the throne of God? Oh! were you to lend an ear, you would hear: Vengeance, vengeance; just as if you were to hearken to the lament of your filled coffers and wardrobes you would hear: *Miseremini mei, miseremini mei.*"[3] For are not these riches oftentimes the fruit of robbery and usury bought, in our saint's pregnant words, "at the price of the sweat of your fellow-citizens, of the blood of widows, of the marrow of the bones of wards and orphans," so that, "if

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 176.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, 207. Cf. also pp. 188, 330.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 195, 196. We remarked on an analogous passage in the Latin sermons. Cf. above, p. 150.

any one were to take one of those gowns and squeeze and wring it, the blood of human beings would be seen to flow therefrom? . . . Do you not see that the garment you wear is tinged with blood?"[1]

When addressing so enterprising a people, affairs of commerce and the sins connected with the same could not fail to figure as a theme.[2] After enumerating the eighteen vices proper to commercial life, he proceeds to draw, according to his usual custom, a graphic picture of the tricks practised by dishonest merchants in those days, which bear a marked affinity to those still in vogue.

We now come to the series of sermons on the love of husband and wife,[3] where it is interesting to note the austere friar's appreciation of the charm and the joys of family life, depicted by him in terms of exceptional warmth and grace.

"Can you name me the most beautiful and valuable thing in a house? Is it the possession of a number of obedient, well-attired servants? Not so. Is it the sporting of silver plate, or of cloth or velvet hangings? Not so. Is it the fact of possessing obedient, good and lovable children? Not so. What then? Can you guess? Can you guess? It is the possession of a beautiful, tall, amiable, good, chaste and sweet wife, who will bear her husband children. That is undoubtedly the greatest treasure a house can contain. To what can such a woman be compared? She is like to the

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 193, 194.
[2] Sermon XXXVIII.
[3] Sermons XIX, XX, XXI.

sun that illumines the earth, than which there is naught more ravishing here below. Who is it says so? No other than the author of Ecclesiasticus, in chap. xv. *Sicut sol ornamentum est in altissimis, ita mulier sapiens in domo viri.*"[1]

According to St. Bernardine, a wife, like a tree, should be valued by her fruit; and what fruit is there on earth more enchanting than a little child? For is it not the fruit of the tree planted in Paradise by God Himself? Hear his indignation against the men who, callous to the charms of this gift, likewise fail to appreciate their wife as the giver.

"There are some men who are more indulgent towards a hen on account of the fresh egg she lays daily than towards their own wife. For, if by any chance the hen smashes a pot or a glass, they refrain from striking her, so as not to lose her fruit in the shape of an egg. And yet, oh fools fit for confinement, you cannot put up with a single word from the wife who bears you such noble fruit! For let a woman but say one word too much to her husband, and straightway, seizing a stick, he will begin to beat her, while, at the same time, you will bear patiently with the hen that goes about clucking all day long for the sake of an egg that may very likely be broken. . . . While surly husbands beat their wives for not seeming to them sufficiently elegantly attired, they suffer the hen to deposit her dirt even on the table. . . . Consider, then, unhappy man, consider the noble fruit of woman and be patient. . . .

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, pp. 106, 107.

It is not just to beat her on the smallest provocation. No! . . ."[1]

The preacher hereupon goes on to consider the part played by woman as ruler of a household. He here draws two distinct pictures of family life recalling the minute precision of the old Dutch school. In one he shows us the good housewife keeping her eye to everything, tidying the garret, seeing to the oil, the wine and the salted food, sorting the things to be sold from those to be kept, getting the thread spun and woven into sheets, etc., while, on the other hand, we are shown the discomfort of a man who has no wife to keep house for him, whose home is consequently a prey to dirt and disorder, and who, when his oil is spilled, contents himself with throwing a handful of earth upon it, while his wine turns steadily to vinegar.

"What, think you, is the bed like whereon he lies? He sleeps in a ditch, nor is the sheet on the bed ever changed until it is torn. In his eating-room, likewise, the remains of melons, bones, salad-parings and various other odds and ends strew the floor, which is scarcely ever swept. And how, think you, is he served at table? Everything is placed on the tablecloth, which is removed only when torn to shreds. The very surface of the table is cleaner, washed as it is by the dogs' licks. The pots and pans are all broken. Go and see for yourselves. How does such a man live, think you? He lives like a mere brute. More-

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, pp. 115, 116.

over, I assure you that it is impossible to live one's life well alone. Women, make your bow!"[1]

It were impossible to follow our saint in his further treatment of this delicate subject, in his dealings with the most intimate and subtle points of conscience connected with married life and handled by him with a frankness unknown to the modern reader. Far be it from us, however, to insinuate this conduct on the part of our pure and saintly friar to have arisen from any kind of delight in questionable topics, when it was in reality prompted exclusively by zeal for the salvation of souls in peril of damnation. Thus "among a thousand marriages," he declares, "I believe nine hundred and ninety to be the work of the devil."[2] And how constantly does he not cry anathema on the preacher who refrains from instructing the ignorant and admonishing the guilty! More than once we find him urging mothers to bring not only their married but also their unmarried daughters to these sermons of his.[3] On such topics, moreover, he desires to be heard by all the confessors of the town, and has a bench placed specially at their disposal. When some of his audience appear scandalized and ready to quarrel with the boldness of his attitude, he evinces neither surprise nor perturbation and remains convinced that he is doing his duty.[4] "Do you know why I speak to you of such matters?" he asks. "I do so for your good. Perhaps you are meanwhile

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, pp. 118, 119.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 95.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 85, 95, 444.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 101.

saying to yourselves, 'Oh! his words exhale a stench which penetrates to my very brain.' I reply that this, to my mind, is no stench, but rather the best perfume in the world."[1] He therefore exhorts his audience to pay heed to his words without taking scandal thereat: *senza scandalo e con fede*.[2] He, on his part, promises to flavour his speech with discretion. "Have you ever seen a cock," he asks, "letting himself down on a dunghill? He does so with the greatest care, raising his wings so as not to mess himself and so be able to fly back to his perch. I will do likewise."[3]

The modern public would doubtless be still more aghast at another of our saint's discourses, devoted entirely to combating the infamous vice which, in days gone by, had called down God's anger upon Sodom,[4] and to which Italy was then a helpless prey.[5] Legal measures were, indeed, forcibly enacted to suppress the same; yet Beccadelli, styled the Panormita, a writer of evil repute, held in high esteem by the princes and Humanists of the day, actually sang its praises in one of his works. This will suffice to explain why Bernardine deemed it an imperative necessity to probe this festering wound with the fiery sword of eloquence, while it likewise accounts for his wish, on this occasion, for a specially large audience. "I would," such are his opening words, "that this sermon might cost me

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 136. [2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 132.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 95. [4] Sermon XXXIX.
[5] Cf. the sources indicated in Pascal's *History of the Popes*, edited by the Rev. Frederick Antrobus.

half a pound of blood, and also that to-day were Sunday, so that more people might come to hear me."[1]

At other times his choice of subject is determined by the event of the day. The approach of the elections or that of a change of office affords him opportunity to expatiate on the duties appertaining to public life, to citizens in general, and to town officials in particular.[2]

The Feast of the Nativity is marked by a recurrence to his favourite theme.[3] And how joyfully does he not engage upon it! "Oh, ye men and women," he exclaims, "let us this morning drink our fill: *pigliamone stamane una corpacciata.*" Not content herewith, we find his thoughts recurring during the octave to Mary, dwelling this time on the Annunciation. "Oh women," he exclaims, "take care to be attentive, since the very stones, if only they possessed will and understanding, would crave to listen." The next day, still harping on the same theme, he lights upon *una gentillissima materia*, as he calls it,[4] depicting Mary, at the moment of the angelic salutation, surrounded by twelve noble maidens, personifying Our Lady's virtues.[5] Such allegories were, indeed, very popular in the medieval pulpit, though often

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 253.
[2] Sermons XVII, XXV.
[3] Sermon XXIV.
[4] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. II, p. 430.
[5] Bernardine was particularly fond of this allegory of Our Lady's maiden companions, which occurs, with some variations, in several of his Latin discourses (*Sancti Bernardino Opera*, Vol. II, p. 319; Vol. III, p. 288), as also in an unpublished MS. of other *Prediche Volgari*, delivered at Florence, and preserved in the library of that town. This allegory was, indeed, frequent in the mouths of preachers of that day, and is found, with some modifications here and there, in Gerson's and Maillard's sermons.

of a style less graceful and more recondite than that adopted by our saint.

Notwithstanding this immense variety of subjects, the reader will quickly perceive all these sermons to be the outcome of the same spirit of apostolic zeal, of a burning and constraining love of souls. Whenever he is conscious of having gained a hearing he is so full of joy as to be physically as well as spiritually refreshed thereby. "I can assure you," he says one day, while applauding the good dispositions manifest in the assembly, "that I have put on flesh since my arrival in this town." And signs of obduracy, on the other hand, fill the saint's soul with grief and with fear in anticipation of God's wrath about to smite his audience, whom he never ceases to warn of their peril in prophetic, accents like those with which, half a century later, Savonarola was to strike terror into the heart of voluptuous Florence. The following quotation taken at random from several such sermons will serve to illustrate our meaning.

"You are in a more prosperous condition than any other city, but, alas! I greatly fear lest, underneath such favours, there lurk something which terrifies me. You are rolling in riches, are surrounded by peace, and have abundance of all earthly goods, while you are looked up to on all sides.[1] . . . Where could the wheels of life roll more smoothly than in Italy? Take heed lest God say to you: Peace did I bestow, but you knew not how to value it, wherefore I

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, p. 132.

will bequeath warfare unto you. I have granted you riches, but now I will visit you with want. I have bestowed on you a family, but now will I bequeath mortality unto you. . . .[1] Were you to tell me that nothing was wanting to you, I should reply that you lacked one thing only. And what may that be? The anger of God is all that is lacking unto you. . . .[2] Take heed, take heed, oh town of Siena, lest it be said of thee what God said of Jerusalem: *Vidit civitatem a longè: flevit super illam et dixit: Si tu cognovisses tempus visitationis tuæ*, etc. . . . Oh Siena, beautiful thou certainly art, yet not so lovely as was Jerusalem! Thou art living in peace, yet in a peace less profound than that enjoyed by Jerusalem! And I say to thee: Beware, beware, for inasmuch as the sins of that people provoked the anger of God, so, in like manner, beware lest thy sins bring upon thee the wrath of the Most High. He watches and watches, but after this time of watching be accomplished, know for certain that He will then do to you what He did to Jerusalem, when not a stone of its monuments remained intact, and when it was wholly obliterated."[3]

Elsewhere Bernardine speaks of that most persuasive of preachers who attracts a crowd of thirty or forty thousand persons. "Do you know whom I mean?" he inquires. "His name is *frate Bastone*.[4] He is an eloquent preacher,

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. I, pp. 275, 276.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 127.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 131.

[4] I have already remarked that Bernardine loved thus to personify the chastisements of God.

and I am much afraid lest he come to preach to you."[1] Our saint, moreover, elsewhere likens the angel of God's wrath to a mower.

"How does the mower mow the hay? He seizes his scythe and lets it fall down, down, down. Alas! alas! Siena! when the mower whets his scythe, take heed to thyself, I say. For having mown one plot of grass he again whets his scythe, looking about him on all sides for some more to mow. He gazes north, south, east and west. And remember he has already mown on all sides save here. Wherefore I say to thee, Siena, beware, beware, beware."[2]

A little further on he reverts to the same metaphor.

"The mower, with the point of his scythe touching the ground and the handle in his hand, questions with himself as follows: Where shall I begin to mow? And thus he waits in suspense. But having ended his deliberations, he raises his scythe, describing a circle with it. In like manner, God's angel has stood still to reflect where he should mow. If he should touch you, Sienese, then woe, woe, woe unto you."[3]

He loses no opportunity of imploring his fellow-citizens not to stand idle, awaiting the mower's approach. "Oh town of Siena, oh ye fellow-citizens, women and little children," he exclaims, "tarry not, tarry not! Turn unto God. . . . Wait not for the fall of the scythe!"[4] This

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, pp. 84, 85.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 323.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 317.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 331.

outburst of tender solicitude is indeed the refrain of all his exhortations and words of warning, the underlying motive of all his eloquence.

"I may not tarry here. I must move on, and I shall go on my way lamenting, as the Germans do. Nevertheless, the love and solicitude I bear towards you will make me prick up my ears at the bare mention of Siena. I depart with a heart heavy with sorrow and with tears, because of my dread lest evil befall you."[1]

And again: "Alas! To whom do I speak? I address my own Sienese. Oh! if you could look into my heart and see what love and tenderness are stored therein, verily, seeing the same, you would credit my voice. . . .[2] Oh fellow-citizens, truly I belong to you, and I speak to you out of much affection. Alas! I dread your fall."[3]

Occasionally these warnings assume a more precise shape, and a form characteristic of the age. On such occasions the *condottiere* is designated as the instrument of divine vengeance, possibly near at hand. For Italy was then a prey to international bands of soldiery, whose leaders, occasionally gifted with ability and ever devoid of principle, either sold their services to the highest bidder, fighting one day for one country, the next for another, or else indulged in independent highway robbery. Thus tyrants naturally found in them instruments well adapted for the execution of their crafty and ambitious designs, nor were they averse to see-

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 84.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 85.
[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 94.

ing their effete subjects replaced by mercenaries of a military stamp. Though the *condottiere* would occasionally, prompted by a sense of fellowship, treat a colleague he had sworn to combat with some degree of consideration, yet the same treatment by no means befell the rest of the population, in whose eyes the advent of the *condottiere* was the inevitable signal for massacre and devastation, nor had Siena failed to share in these experiences, and had even in days gone by levied a considerable sum of money to be spared a renewal of these dreaded incursions. His fellow-citizens can, therefore, have been by no means at a loss to grasp the full extent of the peril to which Bernardine alluded when he exclaimed: "Oh town of Siena, now is the time to beware, since when God will wait no longer for thy conversion, He will say to one of the executors of his lofty designs: Captain of men-at-arms, cover this town and devastate it."[1] He goes on to liken the soldiers of the *condottieri* to the locusts mentioned in the Apocalypse.[2] And he depicts them ravaging the land, ransacking the towns, butchering persons of either sex, youth and age, violating women, setting fire to houses, destroying works of art, putting an end to trade, cutting the vine, looting the cattle, and burning such spoils as they cannot carry off with them. Defying his audience to contradict this account,[3] he calls upon persons whose memory mounts back to thirty or

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 143.
[2] Sermons XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXVI.
[3] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, pp. 65, 66, 104.

forty years to attest the accuracy of the picture.[1] "Have you never heard tell of Sir Giovanni Acuto and his English followers? Is there no one present who remembers them? Such men knew how to punish, eh?"[2] This Acuto, whose real name was John Hawkwood, an Englishman by birth, had, at the close of the previous century, figured among the most renowned and desperate of Italian *condottieri*. It is related how, at the taking of a town, finding two of his men fighting over a nun, he exclaimed: "Take each a half of her," and thereupon, with his own hand, cut her in two. And when the Minorites accosted him with their wonted greeting of "Sir, God grant you peace!" he replied, "God deprive you of your alms! Do you want God to cause me to die of hunger? I live on warfare, as you do on alms." This *condottiere's* portrait may still be seen in the cathedral at Florence.

We must not, however, picture our saint as bringing his sermons to a close and taking leave of the Sienese with such gloomy prognostications as this, for in his farewell sermon a tender tone prevails, as he speaks a fatherly and loving adieu to his children. "This may be," he says, "the last time that I shall ever preach to you, and I may see you no more." To those he calls his "*dillettissimi figlinoli*" he addresses his final exhortations, of which some bear reference to God, others to their neighbour, and others, again, to himself. The simplicity of his words

[1] *Pred. Volg.*, Vol. III, p. 181.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 166.

portrays the genuineness of his emotion. When he comes to speak of himself it is only in order humbly to confess his faults and failings. The doctrine he has proclaimed, however, he affirms before God to be the truth, declaring that "if any man rise up to gainsay him as soon as his back is turned, such an one will carry the devil on his back, and will only mislead such as believe in him." He hereupon expresses his thanks to the people and the town officials for having shown him more affection than he deserved. After wondering whether he will ever see them again, which seems doubtful considering his intention of journeying to distant parts, he concludes by begging their prayers in order that he may conform himself to the will of God. Whereupon, after blessing the crowd which thronged around him on the Piazza del Campo, "I leave you," he exclaims, "in the peace of our Lord, and intercede ye to God for me!"

Does not even this cursory glance at the *Prediche Volgari* give the reader quite another idea of St. Bernardine's sermons from that conveyed by the Latin dissertations edited by Père de la Haye? Doubtless a written record, however skilfully made, can never supply for the living voice, which must needs go down with the speaker to the grave; whence the disappointment aroused by the perusal of some of these discourses. A mode of popular address can never be rendered adequately on paper, currying, as it does, to things fleeting as the wind, bent on producing this or that momentary effect, inspired by the particular circum-

stances of the time, relying for its effect on the reciprocity of the audience. Here, if ever, it is a case of accessories acting more powerfully than even speech itself. How telling must have been the preacher's voice and emphasis, the atmosphere and swift transit of emotion from the speaker to his audience by dint of the strong link uniting them, and last, though not least, that ascendancy bequeathed by sanctity and possessed by Bernardine in no small degree! But even though the full power of Bernardine's eloquence has gone the way of all things human, the patiently effected work of the poor Sienese fuller serves as a veritable revelation, enabling us to enter more fully into the results obtained by this marvellous preaching, as also into the praise so unstintingly bestowed upon it. By throwing a vivid light on the methods employed by preachers during the Middle Ages, this record stands out, moreover, as a valuable contribution to one of the most important chapters in the history of the pulpit and in that of society in medieval times.[1]

[1] The interest kindled by the Sienese *Prediche Volgari* would naturally lead to an inquiry into the possible existence of other such records. As we have already mentioned, there exist other MSS. of St. Bernardine's sermons, recorded in the vernacular by one of the audience, in various Italian libraries. Of these several, being mere dry and incomplete summaries, are a negligible quantity. But are there none approaching to Benedetto's work? The most promising, from this point of view, seems to be a MS. containing the sermons delivered at Santa Croce, in Florence, in 1424, and recorded, we are assured, *dalla viva voce* by a Florentine listener. This MS. is in the library in Florence, while a similar one is to be found among the Sienese archives. Some short extracts of the Florentine MS. distinguished by the same freshness and originality proper to the Sienese sermons were published in 1871 under the

title of *Del Torre Moglie, Massime di San Bernardino da Siena, Ricordo di Nozze.* Professor Orazio Bacci is, we hear, credited with the intention of editing the entire MS., but he has not yet done so. Similar discoveries remain to be made concerning the other Italian preachers, Bernardine's disciples, of whose sermons only some rather dry Latin discourses have as yet appeared. It is, indeed, time for the publication of the various records in the vernacular made by members of the audience, and of which the MSS. are still extant in Italy. Thus Friar Marcellino da Civezza, author of the *Storia universale delle Missioni francescane*, unearthed, from the Florentine library, a MS. containing six sermons, of which five were published by him. One of these discourses is by blessed Bernardine of Feltre, the four others by Michele da Milano, which all appeared under the title, *Cinque prediche a Monache, in lingua volgare, di due celebri Francescani del secolo XV* (Prato, 1881). These sermons are not without a certain similarity to those of St. Bernardine.

CHAPTER V

THE STRICT OBSERVANCE

I. Bernardine busies himself with the Observance. Already in the lifetime of St. Francis divergences had arisen regarding the interpretation of his rule, and in particular concerning the practice of poverty. Accentuation of these divergences in course of time. The "Conventuals" and "Spirituals."

II. Humble beginnings of the Observance. Its progress facilitated in Italy and France by the Great Schism. The reform of the Dominicans.

III. State of the Observance at the time Bernardine entered its ranks. His labours towards its propagation. He jealously safeguards the rule. Martin V and Eugène IV favour the Observants.

IV. The Observance and the Humanists. Poggio's attack. Bernardine and his epistles. Motives of hostility on the part of the Humanists. Poggio's distress at the scandal he had created.

V. How are we to reconcile the fact of the existence of the Observance with the unity of the Minorite Order? Vicars established. All attempts at suppressing or attenuating the differences of rule are foiled. Bernardine is named Vicar-General of the Observance.

VI. Bernardine's zeal and wisdom in the exercise of his functions. He obtains his discharge in 1442. Great progress realized by the Observance.

VII. State of the Observance after Bernardine's death. His disciples. St. John of Capistrano. The Observants increase in number. Their separation from the Conventuals. Their present condition.

I

AFTER having devoted about three years, in his cell at Capriola, to the composition of his sermons, Bernardine recommenced his wandering missionary life in the year 1436. With an ardour unabated by age or fatigue, he

hastened to respond to the appeals which, during his temporary retreat, had come to him from many parts of Italy. But he had scarcely employed two years in his apostolic calling (of which it would be difficult to trace the itinerary) than he found himself forced to abandon the same on his nomination, in the year 1438, to the post of Vicar-General, with authority over all the convents of the Strict Observance throughout Italy.

In the midst of his apostolic labours, Bernardine had never ceased to cherish a tender solicitude for everything concerning the welfare and propagation of this reform. During the years of his vicariate this solicitude naturally became more all-absorbing and exclusive, occupying well-nigh all his time and activity. It is, therefore, needful for us to learn something of the origins of a system destined to fill so prominent a place in our saint's life. But in order to give an account which would sufficiently explain Bernardine's staunch advocacy of the same, as well as enable the reader to gauge the part he took in its development, it is necessary to glance at the partially ignored annals of the Minorite Order.

During the two centuries of its existence, this Order had, we find, weathered alike days of sunshine and storm. Owing to this conflicting record we are met, on the one hand, by a sublime outburst of love and enthusiasm, by the wonderful spectacle of an army of nearly two hundred thousand monks, innumerable saints, martyrs and doctors, while on the other we are confronted by a tale of passionate

contests between the friars, of threats of schism, and reciprocal accusations of infidelity and heresy. No doubt the peculiar characteristic of the genius of St. Francis was, in some measure, accountable for this twofold phenomenon. For though one of the most powerful spiritual energizers and stimulators the world has ever seen, so that no man can be said to have ever transported or inflamed the human heart and imagination to the same degree, nor to have sown and reaped, in so short a time, so abundant a harvest of sanctity, of heroism and chivalry, the stirring influence of which appeared in the transformation of the Church, of society, and even of the literary and artistic world, St. Francis was, perhaps, to some extent, lacking in the qualities of organization and legislation. Nay, after creating an immense army, he seemed rather at a loss as to how to discipline and organize it. Then, again, it must in fairness be remembered that, like all other founders of religious orders, it was, at the outset, far from his intention to suscitate a novel institution. He had, in fact, at first only intended to form himself and his first companions into a band of penitents who, without convent or church of their own, should wander like mendicants, heedless of the morrow, through the villages of Umbria, singing of the divine love which consumed them, and preaching wherever they were wanted, returning ill-usage with thanks, and invested with all that tender simplicity and charm which a century later voiced itself in the poetic narratives of the *Fioretti*. No other rule, no

other government were dreamed of save the saint's word and look, save his superhuman penetration, the spell cast by his charm and goodness, and the divine light which seemed to emanate from him. But this enchanting, pious idyll could not prolong itself indefinitely any more than the Church had been able in the long run to rely on the embryo organization to which she was reduced in the days when the apostles, her first bishops, followed Jesus across the plains of Galilee. As the Order grew (and its growth was of a prodigious rapidity) it became evident that the personal influence of the founder would no longer suffice, since the latter could not be present everywhere, and could not live for ever. Besides, with such a host of friars, a more mixed element crept in. "There are too many Minorites!" was often said to St. Francis, as a definite rule, an established constitution became more and more of an imperative need. But conscious of his incapacity for such an undertaking, the saint resolved, with all the confidence of humility, to confide the task to one better qualified for its accomplishment. And his choice fell on Cardinal Hugolin, a man animated by the spirit of discipline and of organization traditional in Rome.

It was with his assistance, therefore, that the *Poverello* drew up successively two somewhat extensive rules. But even so, he had some difficulty in bringing himself to lay down imperative commands, apt as he was to confine himself rather to exhortation, effusion, and high aspiration—a touching phraseology doubtless, but one more open to conflicting

interpretation than a simple rule, or series of commands, would have been.

These divergencies began already to appear during the lifetime of the founder, especially as regards the subject of poverty, which, in the eyes of St. Francis, was not only an abstract virtue which he exhorted his following to practise, but a living reality, a noble, unjustly despised lady of whom he had constituted himself the champion, a bride whom he embraced with love, the widow of Christ whom, forsaken for twelve centuries,[1] he now espoused in his turn. And he gave himself to her without reserve or moderation, so that, not content with obliging the friars in particular to the practice of entire destitution, he forbade the Order in general to possess anything, whether church or dwelling—a prohibition which collided with the ideas then prevailing not only among the secular clergy, still regarded as part of the feudal system, but even amongst the regulars represented at this epoch by the wealthy Benedictine abbeys. Nay, even such as welcomed a reaction against the excessive opulence of the Church, asked themselves whether so wholesale a reprobation of property were not a practical impossibility, and how far it were feasible to carry out to the letter an injunction seemingly inspired by generosity rather than by foresight.

[1] *Vide* Dante (*Paradiso*, canto xi) :—

"*Questa privata del primo marito,*
Mille e cent anne e più despetta e scura,
Fino a costui si stette senza invito."

And these doubts and perplexities, penetrating amongst the Minorites, sowed the seeds of discord. Nay, these were already more or less openly disseminated by one of St. Francis's own companions chosen by him to govern the Order as Vicar-General—the celebrated Brother Elias, a man of great ability, but whose religious ideal differed from that of the *Poverello.* Such growing signs of opposition could not escape the notice of the saint, and tended greatly to embitter the remaining years of his life. Thus we find him more than once sadly prognosticating the future, and, notably in the supreme words of his will, raising a moving protest against those who threatened to demolish his work.

After the founder's death, the friars in favour of a mitigation of the rule waxed still greater in number and audacity. The very success the Order had met with, moreover, the large convents and magnificent churches with which the people's liberality had endowed it, as well as the high dignities accorded by popes and princes in recognition of their services to many of its members, seemed well-nigh incompatible with the rigorous poverty and humility advocated by St. Francis. Thus, gradually and surely, did the mitigated rule militate in favour of relaxation. For by the middle of the thirteenth century already we find St. Bonaventure denouncing the laxity of the friars, while Dante, shortly afterwards, puts into the saint's mouth, in Paradise, a bitter lament over the Franciscan family, which, after following faithfully in the footsteps of its father, has now

turned its back upon him, literally "has now placed the tip of its foot where he had placed his heel."[1]

Yet, despite this daily and formidable increase of adherents of the mitigated rule, the Strict Observance still maintained itself, fostered with jealous fervour in the lowly convents of the Order, inspired with zeal by the narrative of men regarded as transmitting the traditions of Assisi, and which resisted all contrary pressure and example with now violent, now gentle obduracy, protesting against what they deemed infidelity and treason in accents which thrilled the Christian world.

Had the uncentralized form of government appertaining to the ancient Benedictine monasteries been applied to the Franciscans, a solution of the difficulty would not have been far to seek; they might easily have been divided into two branches like those of Cluny and Citeaux. But another idea lay at the root of the foundation of the two great Mendicant Orders of the thirteenth century, the idea of unity under one head, whence it naturally followed that either party sought to impose its own way of thinking on the other. It was clear, moreover, that the monks of the mitigated rule, styled "Brethren of the Community" or *Conventuals*, were growing far more numerous than the *Zelanti* or "Spirituals," and were, with few exceptions, stepping into the shoes of authority, as either local or provincial superiors. They differed, moreover, as to the line

[1] *La sua famiglia, che si mosse dritta*
Co' piedi alle su' orme, è tanto volta
Che quel dinanzi a quel dirietro gitta.—(*Paradiso*, canto VII.)

of authority they adopted, for, while some were moderate and conciliatory, and strove to act the part of arbiter and peacemaker, others again showed themselves eager to suppress that which appeared to them a revolt, and shrank not from applying measures of persecution in order to attain their end.

The Spirituals, however, unflinchingly bore a persecution which not infrequently invested them with a halo and crown akin to that of martyrdom. But their resolution turned to obstinacy, their resistance to rebellion, when they believed themselves justified by St. Francis's words in rejecting the authority of superiors whenever they judged it to be at variance with the rule. The consciousness of their greater austerity, moreover, awoke within them temptations to pride and to contempt of others—a contempt which they extended to the entire Church, which appeared to them pervaded by relaxation and destined to suffer speedy chastisement. Lacking, besides, in that which their founder, despite all his mystic flights, had ever adhered to, namely, clear good sense, discipline of mind, docility to religious authority and scrupulous orthodoxy, they fell a prey to the apocalyptic illuminism which, at the close of the twelfth century, had originated with a Cistercian of Calabria, Joachim de Floris.

In the wake of this dreamy prophet, the doctors, historians and poets of the Spirituals, such as John of Parma, Peter John Olive, Ubertino da Casale, Angelo Clareno and Jacopone da Todi, bent their thoughts on a third revelation,

which was to transform the spiritual world. For, according to them, the first, that of the Father, had been the reign of Precept; the second, that of the Son, the reign of Grace; while the third was to be the reign of free Love, wherein the contemplative orders would replace the rest of the Church as a secular and temporal institution. Led astray by their devotion to St. Francis, they deified his image, exaggerated out of all proportion the part he had played, magnified what one of them termed "his conformities" with Jesus, and received his doctrine as a second gospel, and himself as the second Messiah of the revelation predicted by Joachim, while the Minorite Order they deemed destined to absorb the Universal Church and bring mankind to its highest stage of development.

The popes were frequently driven to interfere in their attempt to re-establish peace and unity in the Franciscan Order. In general, with the exception of Celestine V, they held the Spirituals more or less in suspicion, chiefly on account of their Joachimite tendencies. But, while seconding the monks of the mitigated rule, they were careful to warn them of the danger of falling a prey to relaxation.

Many of the Spirituals, and notably Ubertino da Casale, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, refused to submit to the decisions of the Holy See, denying its right to modify a rule revealed by God. Resistance on this head being of an obviously temerarious character, the Spirituals were foiled. But the incident was a lamentable one,

dragging down to the level of mere sectarianism an enterprise inspired at its birth by the purest and most exalted motives, and upheld by much staunch virtue. It was, indeed, bound to leave a doubtful and mixed impression on the mind. For whilst admiring this fidelity in upholding the Franciscan ideal as well as this courage in defending it, one is nevertheless painfully alive to the presence of suspicious doctrines allied to a spirit of revolt; nay, at times it is difficult to make sure whether one is dealing with saints or heretics, martyrs or rebels—a doubt, apparently, not far from the mind of the ecclesiastical body which, after persecuting John of Parma and Jacopone da Todi during life, beatified them after death.[1]

II

Towards the middle of the fourteenth century, therefore, it seemed as though the cause of a stricter adherence to

[1] The controversy which arose in the first half of the fourteenth century respecting the poverty of Christ and His apostles, causing so singular a disturbance in the Christian world and apparently sowing the seeds of discord in the Papacy itself, has often been erroneously connected with the question of the Spirituals. In reality, however, it created no fresh rupture in the Minorite body, although it was, undoubtedly, a cause of dissension between this and other religious orders, notably the Dominican. But it serves to throw light on the troubled state of the Franciscan world, giving us the sorry spectacle of a Chapter in conflict with the Pope, of the Minister-General and the most important personages of the Order siding against the Holy See and upholding Louis of Bavaria and his anti-pope, himself a Minorite. And yet, notwithstanding all this, from the history of this controversy we likewise gather the extent to which the Order had retained the instincts of Catholic fidelity, since the mass of the Minorite body did in nowise follow its revolted leaders, but, extricating itself from them, finally brought them back to repentance.

the rule had perished, together with the Spirituals, irremediably compromised by their foolhardy indocility. In those days following on the great pestilence and immediately preceding the Great Schism, moreover, the monastic spirit was by no means directed towards fervour and austerity, which makes the fact the more remarkable that at this epoch originated, however obscurely and noiselessly, a movement destined gradually under the name of the Observance to recall well-nigh the whole Minorite band to the narrow path from which it had strayed. It sprang into being, under the auspices of John of Valle, in the poor little convent of Brogliano, situated between Camerino and Foligno, in a mountainous country not far from Assisi, a part specially imbued with Franciscan traditions, and which had been regarded for more than a century as the stronghold of the *Zelanti*.[1] John of Valle and his brethren were, moreover, linked with the Spirituals, one of whose survivors, Angelo Clareno, had found a home amongst them. They were likewise fervent lovers of poverty and followers of the strict rule, although more prudent, modest and docile than their forerunners, since they broke with Joachimism, spoke no more of reforming the Church nor of creating a schism in their Order, and begged only of their superiors to leave them in peace to follow the rule after their own fashion.

And at first the Franciscan authorities showed themselves

[1] On the origin of the Observance, cf. Otto Huttebrauker: *Der Minoritenorden zur Zeit des grossen Schismas* (Berlin, 1893).

tolerant and even benevolent in their regard, the manifest virtue of the quasi-heterodox party inspiring them with sympathy and respect, while their scarcity and obscurity militated in their favour. Occasionally, however, distrust gained the upper hand, and the wish to repress them re-asserted itself. Thus, for a time, we find Gentile da Spoleto, who had replaced John of Valle, cast into prison and his community dispersed. Despite its alternating fortunes, however, the little group continued not only to subsist, but even slowly to expand, and, under the guidance of blessed Paoluccio da Trinci, chosen to succeed in the year 1363, the progress became even slightly more marked. By a singular phenomenon, moreover, the scandal of the Great Schism, which arose A.D. 1378, was in the designs of Providence destined to serve the cause of the Observance. Since the Order was divided, as indeed was the Church, into two obediences (Conventuals and Observants standing towards each other somewhat like pope and anti-pope), the superiors of either obedience abstained from pushing their commands to a point at which their subjects might have been thrown into the opposite camp. And thus Paoluccio obtained permission to receive novices, and even to found and create new convents. Though it was doubtless not the intention of the Observants to separate themselves from the bulk of the Minorite Order, nor to withdraw their allegiance from the Minister-General, yet they lived apart, following their own rule of life, independent of the provincial, and governed by their own superiors. The year

1390, moreover, in which Paoluccio died in the odour of sanctity, and was succeeded by John Stronconio, proved likewise memorable in the annals of the Order as having inaugurated a movement of expansion amongst them when the Observants, emerging from the mountain fastness where they had hitherto been confined, made their appearance in divers parts of Italy, and surely, if gradually and obscurely, conquered the ground.

And at this same epoch, though independently of the Italian Observance, symptoms of a return to the strict rule began to manifest themselves among the Minorites of Spain and Portugal, and more forcibly still amongst the Minorites of France, where the reform was destined at the close of the fifteenth century to receive fresh impulse at the hands of the most remarkable woman of the day, St. Colette.[1] This daughter of a Picardy carpenter, who arose suddenly, like Joan of Arc, her contemporary, in torn and distraught France, astounding the world by her miracles and austerities, not only directed a reform of the poor Clares to which she belonged, but, likewise, with superhuman skill and ability, inaugurated that reform of the Friars Minor known as Colettine Franciscans.

At this time, moreover, a universal reaction against relaxation had set in, apparent in the other great Mendicant Order, among the sons of St. Dominic, from the close of the fourteenth century downwards. For, stimulated by the exhortations of St. Catherine of Siena, and by the example

[1] Born 1381 ; died 1447.

of blessed Clare of Gambacorta, who reformed the Dominicans, Blessed Raymond of Capua, John Dominici and Lawrence of Ripafratta resolved to carry a Dominican reform, which was propagated in the fifteenth century by St. Antonine in Italy, and afterwards by others throughout the length and breadth of the Christian world.[1]

III

When therefore, in the year 1402, Bernardine assumed the Minorite habit at Siena, the Observance had already made some way in Italy, for though individual superiors might hesitate as to the amount of autonomy to confer, the question of suppression had ceased to exist. It had, moreover, succeeded in securing respect and in freeing itself from the odium of suspicion which had attached itself to the Spirituals. And if it reckoned not above twenty-five small and inconspicuous convents in the Peninsula, inhabited only by about one hundred and thirty Friars, it counted a certain number of Minorite allies, who, while residing in conventual houses, were yet heart and soul with the Observance, aspiring to live according to its maxims, or, if they lacked courage for that, at least recognizing its

[1] As regards this Dominican reform at the end of the fourteenth and in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and particularly the part played in it by Dominici and designated by St. Antonine as "*primas suscitator observantiæ regularis in Italiâ*," see the Rev. Augustin Rossler, *Cardinal Johannes Dominici, ein Reformatorenbild aus der Zeit des grossen Schisma* (Freiburg, 1893). Cf. also Père Chapotin, *Études historiques sur la province dominicaine de France*, and, finally, the Bollandist, *passim*.

moral superiority. Friendly relations having been thus established between a certain number of Conventuals and Observants, Bernardine found his way paved for him, and we have already seen how, after entering the mitigated convent of St. Francis at Siena, he left almost immediately with the full sanction and approbation of the guardian of this house to seek and follow a stricter rule in the monastery of Colombaio.[1]

Scarcely had Bernardine joined the Observance than he devoted himself with ardour to its propagation within the limited circle to which his action was still confined, one of his first acts being, as we know, the foundation, in the year 1405, of the convent of Capriola, near Siena. But even outside this sphere of influence, the movement was slowly but persistently growing, so that in 1415 its adherents found themselves in possession of the most ancient convent of the Order, that of St. Mary of the Angels at Assisi, while the number of Italian convents following the strict rule was at this time roughly estimated at thirty-five.

With Bernardine's growing popularity and renown, moreover, through his preaching in Lombardy and in the rest of Italy, the growth of the Observance assumed far more rapid strides in another way. For everywhere at the preacher's word there arose, as if by magic, no mere humble convents far removed from the madding crowd, but large monasteries in the neighbourhood of important towns. The

[1] See above, p. 16.

impulse in this new movement of expansion had been given by the Milanese, who, in the year 1419, had founded, under the invocation of St. Mary of the Angels, a convent of considerable magnitude, which was immediately crowded with young men, some of whom belonged to the best families of the town. And it did not last long before their example was followed at Pavia, Bergamo, Brescia, Florence, Pisa, etc., while elsewhere the already existing houses were subjected to a reform. Everywhere our saint was in demand as the guiding spirit of these new foundations. Following in his wake, such of the new body as were gifted with oratory became popular preachers in their turn, and were even some of them attended with so much success that Bernardine one day spoke to the Sienese of the "wonders" wrought by the sermons of some of his companions, notably by those of Mathieu of Sicily and John of Apulia.[1] Nay, a preacher had but to call himself a disciple of Brother Bernardine in order to ensure himself a hearty welcome, so that we find the latter putting the people on their guard against such as should unwarrantably assume this title. "Do not believe them," said he, "unless they can produce a certificate written by me."[2] Yet it was not Bernardine's oratorical gifts alone but his virtues which the brethren of the Observance sought to emulate, so that in these convents sanctity flourished, as it seldom does save at the eve of a monastic revival. These

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari, edite da* Luciano Banchi, Vol. I, p. 72, 73.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 72, 73; Vol. III, p. 372.

days witnessed (to name only the most distinguished of their number) the labours of such men as St. John of Capistrano, St. James of the Marches and blessed Albert of Sarteano, who had all three taken the habit between the years 1415 and 1417. But was it not to be feared that, amid the glory of renown, the Observance might swerve from the path of humility, austerity and fidelity to absolute poverty which it had so faithfully trodden in the days of trial and obscurity? Fortunately Bernardine was there to ward off this danger. He who, as the reader will recall, had refused Visconti's perfidious gift,[1] would suffer no Minorite to receive or accept gold even for religious purposes; nay, even when important sums were bequeathed to the saint for the building of monasteries, he refused them, being loath, says his biographer, to look at, handle or touch money.[2] This vexed question, indeed, he regarded as the touchstone whereby a good friar might be distinguished from a bad one. In one of his sermons to the Sienese, he dwells wrathfully on the many Minorites who go about collecting money and gathering up fragments of precious metal and broken rings, under plea of making them into crosses and chalices for the Church. "If one of them fall in with you," said he, "and pretend to be of those who hold with Brother Bernardine, believe him not, for, as the silversmith knows the tests for distinguishing unalloyed metal from alloy, so, by the money question,

[1] See above, p. 111.

[2] "*Pecuniam ejusmodi nec aspicere nec contrectare, nec conservare volebat.*"

al fatto del denaiuolo, you may gather who are mine and who are not."[1] Impressed by the fervour of the religious of the Strict Observance, and reassured as to their orthodoxy, the Holy See, far from treating them with the distrust which had marked its attitude towards the Spirituals, regarded them with favour and bestowed upon them numerous signs of confidence. Thus Martin V, by a number of bulls, authorizes the foundation of new convents and the transfer to the Observance of several old ones,[2] and he actually placed the latter, to the intense mortification of the Conventuals, in possession of La Verna, the sacred mount where St. Francis had received the stigmata. In the year 1427, it is true, the fair fame of the Observance was momentarily clouded by the accusations against Bernardine regarding the devotion to the name of Jesus.[3] It was, however, speedily restored to its pristine lustre.

The successor of Martin V, Eugene IV, himself a monk, naturally reckoned principally on the monastic orders to defend Catholicism against the perils which menaced it. He consequently attached great weight to their maintenance in a condition of fervour, and, if he deemed it impossible to institute a general reform of the Church, he was at least desirous to promote that of the cloister. Thus,

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. I, p. 71, 72.

[2] Wadding (see *Annale's Minorum*, Vol. X; *passim*) refers to and quotes several of these bulls of Martin V.

[3] See above, chap. III.

though much attracted by the Dominicans, with whom he had lived during his long stay in Florence, he treated the Franciscans, and particularly the Observance, with no less benevolence. He had a special love for John of Capistrano, and we know how one of his first acts was to clear Bernardine of the odious accusations which had again been levelled against him. About the same time, moreover, having invited the Observance to single out from amongst their number six "earnest, learned and resourceful" men who might be placed at his disposal and set apart for the execution of his designs, we find John of Capistrano, James of the Marches and Albert of Sarteano amongst those designated. One may, indeed, wonder at not finding Bernardine's name down on this list, he whom all the Observants regarded as their master, but this omission may very possibly have been deemed wise, prompted by a wish not to deter him from his apostolic labours. Eugene, anyhow, lost no time in entrusting John of Capistrano with the critical affairs of Italy, in sending James of the Marches to Bosnia and Pannonia, then a prey to heresy, and in dispatching Albert of Sarteano with a few friars to the East, there to pave the way for the return of the schismatical Church to unity, a task facilitated by the extreme perils with which the Byzantine Empire was beset at the hand of the Turk, and by the need it felt of relying on Western Christianity. At the same time this Pontiff encouraged, as his predecessor had done, the propagation of a religious order which could furnish him with such

valuable tools, exhibiting a tendency, moreover, to favour the Observants at the expense of the Conventuals; thus, in the year 1434, we find him transferring to the former the guardianship of the holy places of the Holy Land.

IV

It must not, however, be imagined that the Observants met with naught but favour and benevolence on all sides, since they had incurred the displeasure of a then formidable power, that of the Humanists. Poggio, indeed, one of the most celebrated if not the most estimable of their number, never missed an opportunity of exciting contempt for the *Frati* in general and for those styling themselves Observants in particular, growing loud in invective against "those vagabonds," *hos circulatores*, "to be seen everywhere in sordid apparel and with bent heads," against those "tedious barkers," *hos molestos latratores*. According to him they were coarse buffoons, ignorant men, whose success was due to mimicry and to an untiring voice, hypocrites greedy of gain, who sought, not the conversion of sinners, but the favour of the masses. He accused them, moreover, of disseminating abuses and of forming "a band of concocters of crime rather than a congregation of religious," declaring that his sense of propriety alone, of which his other writings may afford us a sample, prevents his entering more explicitly into their dishonourable actions. Nor did he hesitate to implicate St. Bernardine by name in these attacks, for though unable to contest his eloquence and the

success of his preaching, he reproaches him with having a greater eye to his own glory than to the good of souls.[1]

But what, we may ask, was the cause of this animosity, since, if there were a few *Frati* whose rather unpolished roughness of speech might grate on the polished refinement of these fourteenth-century *litterati*, this was by no means the case with Bernardine and his more prominent followers? In his youth our saint had, indeed, as we have seen, studied letters with much success; nay, according to a contemporary writer, he had even at one time devoted himself to the research of ancient manuscripts.[2] And, though since more attracted and absorbed by sacred science, he was nowise averse to general culture. Nor is any trace to be found in his writings of the uneasiness prevalent amongst other religious at sight of the prominent place afforded to pagan authors in the formation and training of the mind. His sermons contain no warnings against this peril, such as are to be met with in the works of John Dominici,[3] and are altogether exempt from the anathema pronounced in after years by Savonarola. Bernardine, indeed, entertained friendly relations with many celebrated Humanists, such as Ambrogio Traversari, Leonardo Giustiniani, Francesco Barbaro, and Guarino of Verona, while two other Humanists, Bernabæus da Siena and Maphæus Vegius, were destined to

[1] *Poggius: Historia convivialis de Avaritiâ; Dialogus adversus hypocrisim; Dialogus de Miseriâ humanæ conditionis.* Cf. also *Epistolæ*, edited by Tonellis, *passim.*

[2] Mehus, *Vita Ambrosii Traversarii.*

[3] See amongst others a work of Dominici, entitled *Lucula noctis.*

become his biographers. And one of his favourite disciples, whom he recommended to the Sienese as his most beloved son,[1] and who in time became one of the chiefs of the Observance, Albert of Sarteano, was a brilliant pupil of Guarino, and still continued, as a friar and preacher, to study Greek with his old master. Moreover, if Bernardine's anxiety to foster a spirit of Franciscan humility among his monks led him to place one of talent under the care of religious versed only in the things of God and the interior life, yet he was ever averse to robbing any one of culture which, if well directed, appeared to him a positive aid to the apostolic mission.

On this score, then, Poggio could harbour no grievance against Bernardine and his companions. His antipathy had another cause. Libertines in morals and in mind, these epicurean sceptics, who longed for the re-establishment of paganism, could only regard with an unfavourable eye men who, by their life and doctrine, by their word and aspect, stood out as the most conspicuous, nay, exasperating, personification of asceticism and penance. Nor were incidents wanting to lay bare this underlying hidden cause of grievance. Thus we find Poggio, in the year 1429, reproaching Bernardine for founding a convent near Florence in a delightful spot hallowed to the Humanists' memory by the recollection of pleasant meetings with literary friends. That such a place should henceforth be the residence of the miserable *Frati* struck him as a

[1] *Le Prediche Volgari*, Vol. III, p. 372.

profanation, and he moved heaven and earth to obtain a veto from Rome, furiously reviling the while those wretched monks for fixing upon so delightful a site for their dwelling: "*Loca amœna, voluptuosa, omni referta jucunditate.*"[1]

But great as was Poggio's renown, his attacks were powerless to tarnish the lustre of Bernardine's and his companion's fair fame; nay, far from injuring them, Poggio's weapons were apt to recoil upon the offender, so that, occasionally somewhat aghast at the sight of the weeds he had sown, we find him seeking to repair his wrong by rendering homage to the virtue, science and eloquence of our saint, or of Albert de Sarteano—a testimony of double value on account of the Humanist's recognized hostility.[2]

Filelfo, another Humanist, moreover, then engaged in a literary polemic with Poggio, did not fail in his satires to hold up to public indignation the man capable of insulting such holy men,[3] though this did not deter Filelfo, who, at heart, was no whit better than his adversary, from seeking, a little later, to make a hit at Bernardine and the Minorites, but he succeeded no better than Poggio had done.[4]

V

The more the monasteries of the Observance grew in number and importance, the more urgent and difficult

[1] *Poggii Epistolæ.* See notably a letter of 16 December, 1429, bk. IV, ep. iii.

[2] *Poggii Epistolæ*, Lib. III, ep. XXXV; Lib. IV, ep. iii.

[3] *Satyræ Philelfi*, Satire II, 3, and Satire VI, 5.

[4] Joannes Jovianus Pontanus, *De Sermone.*, Lib. V, cap. i.

became the problem of reconciling their existence with the unity of the Franciscan Order, since, on the one hand, to place them simply under the jurisdiction of the head of the rest of the Order, who was always a Conventual, was sure to draw trouble and persecution down upon them, while, on the other, a wholesale renunciation of their allegiance would inevitably lead to a rupture. This vexed question had been pending for a long time, and had already led to many futile attempts at solution, and much vain dispute. Thus, at a time when a spirit of reconciliation prevailed, vicars, belonging to the reform, but chosen by the Minister-General and solely dependent on him, had been established as mediators between the houses of the Observance and the superior authorities of the Order. The extent of their power, however, was subject to extreme variation, for while Stronconi had, at the beginning of the century, been named Vicar-General of the Observants throughout Italy, the exercise of Bernardine's functions in the same capacity extended, in the year 1421, only to the provinces of Tuscany and of St. Francis. In 1415 the French Observants had wrung from the Council of Constance, as the fruit of bitter conflict, a more firmly guaranteed independence, since it was ordained that the vicars chosen by them might not be refused recognition by the Conventual authorities. This rule did not extend to Italy, however, where the choice of the vicars remained in the hands of the Minister-General.

As long as the Observance comprised only a small

handful of obscure monks, the Conventuals judged it of little consequence whether or no it were granted a certain degree of autonomy. But the latter's view changed with the former's visible growth in numbers as well as in importance; nay, a fear began to be entertained lest this practical self-government should eventually lead to a theory of absolute independence. And, struck by the danger, Martin V, though personally favourable to the reformed party, asked himself the question, if it were not a feasible plan to make the Observants submit to the direct government of the Conventuals, on condition of their obtaining from the latter a more literal application of the rule. He was led hopefully to consider this solution of the problem, moreover, owing to the fact of John of Capistrano, one of Bernardine's principal disciples, being favourably disposed towards it. Hence, in the year 1430, he summoned a chapter of the Order at Assisi, when the Minister-General, Anthony of Massa, who was suspected of favouring the relaxation, was deposed and replaced by William of Casale, a pious man who appeared to be well disposed towards the Observants, the latter, on their part, being called upon to renounce the system of a separate vicariate. At this conference, at which John of Capistrano appeared to exercise the preponderant influence, statutes were drawn up, called *Statuta Martiniana*, with the objective of repressing the abuses prevalent in Conventual monasteries. Thus, without bringing the latter back to the strict rule, they were brought indefinitely nearer, while

the Observants remained free to live after their own fashion, and were recommended to the benevolence of the superiors. The statutes were hereupon submitted to the consideration of the Chapter and approved with acclamation, John of Capistrano being named *socius* of the Minister-General to see to their execution.

The concord thus established was, however, of but brief duration, and a few weeks had not elapsed before many of the Conventuals began to complain of the weight of the yoke they had assumed on the inspiration of the moment, regretting their decision and begging to be dispensed therefrom. The Minister-General, though one at heart with the zealots, was too much taken up by his desire not to dishearten and repel the lukewarm to look to the execution of the statutes, a matter of grievance with the Observants, who thus beholding the compensation for their sacrifice wrested from their grasp, petitioned for a return to their former system of vicars, and thus between the two parties discord grew more lively than ever.

Meanwhile, in 1431, Martin V had been succeeded by Eugene IV, who, lending a favourable ear to the claims of the Observants, tried to impose the *Statuta Martiniana* on the Conventuals, permitted the Observants to assemble a chapter of their own, and accorded them, without delay, the re-establishment of vicars in the form in which it had existed prior to the Chapter of Assisi. It appears, however, that the latter concession was slow to take effect, probably owing to resistance on the part of the Conventuals, since it

was not till July of the year 1438 that the Minister-General, William of Casale, who had fallen ill at Siena, finally determined to satisfy the demands of the Observants by naming a vicar-general with full powers to govern all the Italian Observance in his stead. And the man on whom his choice fell was one after the heart of the adherents of the strict rule, no less a person, in fact, than our saint Bernardine, whose nomination was speedily approved by the Pope as a long-wished-for solution to a stubborn problem.

VI

Bernardine would doubtless have preferred to decline a charge both wounding to his humility and a hindrance to his preaching. But, unable to resist the order of his superiors and the unanimous petition of his brethren, he accepted the task and devoted himself to it with his accustomed zeal. From Capriola, where he fixed his headquarters, he kept his eye on everything, hastening to wherever his presence was needed in order to found or reform some convent, to solve some difficulty, or repress some abuse. Thus we find him only a few months after his nomination at Aquila in the kingdom of Naples, taking vigorous measures against a superior of long standing, who had proved a disseminator of of discord. No wonder that under his energetic impulse the Observance made new progress. It was, above all, his wish that it might preserve its true spirit of poverty and humility, as is shown, amongst others, by the following anecdote.

On Albert of Sarteano's return with a companion from his perilous mission to the Levant, Egypt and Abyssinia, executed by order of Eugene IV, the Pope sent a brilliant retinue to meet him, so that the two monks made their entry into the town mounted on richly caparisoned horses, and surrounded by a crowd cheering and kissing their garments. But Bernardine, who, mounted on an ass by reason of his infirmity, was amongst the bystanders, on beholding the honours rendered to his beloved disciple, was so troubled with fear lest he should be overtaken by a temptation to pride that he exclaimed, "Brother Albert, look to the ground, remembering death, and take heed lest men elevate you more than is beseeming." Albert had no sooner recognized the sound of that voice than, springing from his horse, he ran to Bernardine and, pressing him in his arms, besought him to exchange beasts with him. "No," replied the saint, "we must needs walk different paths; only take care that vain-glory steal not into your heart to rob you of the prize of so much labour." "Fear not, father," was the answer, "for, while surrounded by honours, I have never ceased to address this prayer to God: 'Grant not unto us the glory, O Lord, grant not unto us the glory; but unto Thy Name.'"

Meanwhile the Conventuals looked with a jealous eye on the power conferred on the Vicar-General, and on the impulse he had given to the reform. Bernardine, however, sought to dissipate their fears by the exercise of prudence and charity; for zeal with him did not exclude discretion.

Thus it occurred, during his absence, in the year 1439, that the friars of Capriola secretly admitted a young man into their ranks, sending him to escape the anxious inquiries of his family to another house; whereupon, instigated by complaints on the part of these relatives, the magistrates of Siena addressed themselves to Bernardine, who replied bitterly deploring a deed which he would not have tolerated had he been on the spot,[1] adding that he had immediately given orders to have the young man sent back and produced before the Municipal Council.[2] While clinging moreover to the strict observance of the rule on all essential points, he was, with his accustomed good sense, the enemy of exaggeration in trifling matters, and took occasion to warn simple souls against scruples which would give rise to too narrow and anxious an interpretation of this very rule. With this design he addressed an encyclical letter to his monks, dated 31 July, 1440, interpreting all doubtful passages. This interpretation, which he had devised together with John of Capistrano and a few other friars, nearly always affords a large and wide-minded solution.[3]

The same breadth of spirit manifests itself in all the decisions of the Vicar-General. The primitive Observants,

[1] "*Quia taliter fieri in scandalum non consensissem*" are Bernardine's exact words.

[2] This correspondence is to be found among the MSS. of the Sienese library, and Bernardine's reply has been published in a pamphlet entitled *Dieci lettere di Senesi illustri, pubblicati per le nozze del Cav.* Luciano Banchi.

[3] See the text of this letter in Wadding's *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XI, p. 102.

dwelling in their destitute convents among the Apennines, entirely devoted to prayer and mortification, rustic, uncultured, and far from lettered men, seemed by no means open to the study of the Scriptures; nay, since only those possessed some culture who had acquired it before entering religion, study appeared to them a temptation to pride, as lowering that standard of simplicity which was the distinguishing mark of a Minorite. In their opinion, moreover, St. Francis, at least the rather idyllic St. Francis of the first period, had fostered the humility of ignorance. They forgot, however, that later on the *Poverello*, taught by experience, had regretfully admitted the necessity of schools. This misconception on their part Bernardine sought to remedy by reckoning science among the outfit necessary for those charged with preaching or with spiritual direction. He also prescribed the opening of schools, where the Observants might study theology and canon-law. And shortly after, in the year 1444, John of Capistrano sought and obtained permission from Bernardine to combat the still unvanquished thesis of the humility of ignorance in a treatise, *De promovendo studio inter Minores.*

But, while fulfilling his charge with such fruitful activity, Bernardine all the time longed to be discharged therefrom. Nay, in the year 1440, he already addressed a petition to the Pope to be released from his office. The latter replied, however, that he was happy to be able to testify to the persevering growth of the Observance under Bernardine's auspices, but that the very rapidity of its expansion

rendered it expedient for him to remain at the helm. All he would allow him to do, therefore, was to take a co-adjutor,[1] in virtue of which concession, we find John of Capistrano a few months later nominated to the post of supervisor and commissary of the provinces of Genoa, Milan, and Bologna.

Two years later the death of William of Casale, Minister-General of the Minorite Order, which occurred in 1442, gave Bernardine a fresh opportunity to plead his cause before Eugene IV, and he did so with much insistence, alleging the weight of his years, his approaching death and his desire to resume his preaching, so that the Pope gave way and permitted him to resign his office.

A new vicar-general was not, however, nominated immediately. But, as shortly before, when the Minorites of the province of Padua had been called upon to elect a provincial, the unanimous choice both of the Conventuals and the Observants had fallen on Albert of Sarteano, the Conventual, a fact regarded by the Pope in the light of a happy omen for the possibility of a return of the Franciscan body to the Strict Observance, Eugene, desirous of furthering so desirable a solution, charged Albert, on the death of the Minister-General, and pending the formal nomination of a successor, expected to take place the year following, provisionally to govern the entire Order with the title of vicar-general. This was, of course, equivalent

[1] For the text of this letter, see Wadding's *Annales Minorum*, Vol. VI. pp. 100, 101.

to designating him as his candidate at the coming Minorite election. But the Chapter, which assembled the following year, failed to realize the hopes of Eugene IV. In view of the opposition which manifested itself amongst the mitigated friars, Bernardine and Albert of Sarteano declared themselves ready, indeed, to accept a Conventual minister-general, and proposed and obtained the nomination of Antonio Rusconi who, without himself belonging to the reform, was actuated in its favour. Thus, also, was effected a return to the former system of appointing special vicars for the Observance, John of Capistrano and John Maubert being granted extensive powers in this capacity, the one in Italy, the other throughout the rest of Europe.

Nevertheless, whatever line of opposition the Conventuals might pursue, they were powerless to hinder the spread of the Observance, which, in the year 1443, with the Pope's permission, took possession of the monastery of the Aracoeli, the traditional seat of the minister-general in Rome from the time of St. Bonaventure downwards. What a change had come over the state of affairs since the time when Bernardine entered the obscure convent of Colombaio! Instead of the one hundred and thirty friars who went in those days to make up the Observance in Italy, it now numbered above four thousand—an expansion largely due to Bernardine's untiring efforts, his biographers estimating at no less than three hundred the number of convents founded by him.[1]

[1] These statistics are mentioned by Bernabæus Senensis.

VII

Nor could so marvellous a progress be impeded by Bernardine's death, since his disciples were there to uphold the prestige of the Order. Although blessed Albert of Sarteano only survived his master a few years, St. James of the Marches lived till the year 1476, preaching and missionizing till the hour of his death. And still more fruitful were the apostolic labours of John of Capistrano, whose zeal extended far beyond the confines of Italy. With feet bare and bleeding from long marches, clothed in tatters, and begging for bread, small, shrivelled up and bent in form, there seemed to be nothing of him but nerve, skin, and bone, and yet he retained, even in extreme fatigue, that dauntless courage and gaiety which were ever the mark of a true disciple of St. Bernardine.[1] On his constant journeys undertaken, often in the capacity of papal legate, through France, Spain, and possibly England, as well as through Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Poland, his fame preceded him, causing immense crowds to come forth to meet him, amid the joyful ringing of bells and singing of hymns, while the road was decorated with leaves and flowers, and each man vied with the other in touching the hem of the friar's garb. Nay, the multitudes which flocked around the pulpit so overcrowded the public

[1] Æneas Sylvius, who saw him in Germany, describes him in these terms : "*Pusillum corpore, siccum, aridum, exhaustum, sola cute, nervisque et ossibus compactum, lætum tamen et in labore fortem.*"

square that our missioner was forced to preach in the open fields. And yet for all that, on more than one occasion, notably in Germany, his ignorance of the vernacular compelled him to speak in Latin and to have an interpreter by him to translate his discourse, which in no wise seems to have prevented those who could not understand the language from being moved, nay, converted by his accents and gesture.[1] Those who were too far to hear anything, were happy only to be allowed to feast their eyes upon him, while the miracles he performed drew crowds of sick around him, who were to be seen ranged to the number of three, four, or even five thousand along the road where he had to pass, imploring his compassion, whereupon the saint, moved to pity at sight of their distress, would shed such copious tears that he seemed as though half-dead. "Not since the days of the apostles," adds the eye-witness, from whom these traits are borrowed, "has so great an impulse been given to popular fervour."[2]

Nor was the Observance slow to reap the first-fruits of such success. "At John's word," according to the illustrious contemporary, Æneas Sylvius,[3] "the convents of the Observance seemed literally to spring up out of the ground, whilst the relaxed monasteries seemed to crumble

[1] Joannes Cochlæus, who wrote a history of the Hussites in the sixteenth century, says of those Latin sermons of John of Capistrano: "*Talis erat pronunciatio ut etiam non intelligentes ad lacrymas et vitæ emendationem provocaret.*"

[2] See a letter dated 24 July, 1451, addressed to superiors throughout Tuscany, by Nicolas de Fara, John of Capistrano's companion on his missionary tour in Germany, and published by Wadding: *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XII, ad. ann. 1451.

[3] Quoted by the Bollandists.

away and disappear." A heroic death, moreover, added renewed lustre to this fabulous career. For when, in 1456, Mahomet II, at the head of two hundred thousand Turks, had laid siege to Belgrade, and was threatening to penetrate even into the heart of Europe, while in disjointed, careless and blinded Christendom Hunyadi alone could be found to face the foe, John of Capistrano, then seventy years of age, was by his side; nay, it was he who, by the magic of his word, mustered an army, and who, on the battlefield, crucifix in hand, kindled in the hearts of the combatants the enthusiasm which led them to victory—the victory which was to cost him his life. For a few weeks after Hunyadi's death the white-haired hero likewise fell a prey to the epidemic caused by the accumulation of the enemies' corpses.

Amongst the Observants of the day many others are deservedly celebrated, such as blessed Bernardine of Feltre,[1] whose glorious mission St. Bernardine had foreseen and foretold, and who, to save the people from usury, made himself the advocate of the pawn-shop in the second half of the fifteenth century. But a common link between all these monks was their recognition of St. Bernardine as their master and prototype. Thus it was in his name that James of the Marches worked miracles; it was with his relics that John of Capistrano cured the sick, and his image that he had painted on the standard carried during the Hunyadi Crusade; while he was, at the same time, honoured also by other popular Minorite preachers of the Observance,

[1] Born about 1437, died in 1494.

and notably by Robert of Lecce,[1] who was proclaimed by the Humanists the most eloquent of all orators,[2] and whose Neapolitan animation and mimicry carried his audience by storm. And Robert is loud in his assertion that all the preachers of that time, he himself among the number, looked upon Bernardine as their model.[3]

But whilst the Observance thus prospered in number and renown, the Conventuals, erewhile so powerful, were more and more on the decline. By the end of the fifteenth century, indeed, the proportion between the two parties had been completely reversed, the Observants being far the more numerous.

A unique example this of an Order which, far from relaxing its fervour with the times, reattains, after a lapse of two centuries, by its own effort to that primitive austerity which it had already begun to deem impracticable.

And thus the Observance could no longer be dependent on the Conventuals. Nay, in the year 1517, Leo X, after making a last and futile attempt at unification of the Minorite rule and discipline, finally decided that they were henceforth to form two distinct orders differing one from

[1] See an article on Robert of Lecce by M. F. Torraca, *Arch. Stor. Napolit.*, seventh year, Fasc. I.

[2] The Humanist Pontanus writes: "*Nemo post Paulum Tarsensem melius Roberto Licensi divina tractavit eloquia.*" (Quoted by Wadding.) And he was wont to say: "*Morto Roberto, morirà l'arte di lo predicar.*" (Quoted by Torraca.) Filelfo likewise indulges in an enthusiastic eulogy on Friar Robert in a letter dated April, 1457 (*Francisci Philelfi Epistolarum familiarum libri*, XXXVII).

[3] See a panegyric on St. Bernardine at the end of one of the volumes of sermons by R. de Lecce, entitled *Sermones Roberti de Licio, de laudibus sanctorum.*

the other in name, custom and manner of life. Thus we have on one side the *Minorite Conventuals* profiting by certain dispensations, wearing shoes and with the right to common property, and on the other the *Minorites of the Strict Observance*, among whom the rule is carried out to the letter. Each of these orders has its own superior, but according to papal decree the head of the Observance alone has a right to the title of *Minister-General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, successor of St. Francis*, as also to the use of the traditional seal of the seraphic body.

The fruitfulness of the Observance has never diminished, in fact, new branches have sprouted without detaching themselves from the parent trunk. Thus we meet with the *Discalced Friars* in Spain, with the *Reformed* in Italy, with the *Recollects* in France. Besides which, in the sixteenth century, as a reaction against a certain amount of relaxation, the Capuchins sprang into existence with an organization of their own, so that, in our day, the Franciscan body is once more comprised in three groups. But while the sum total has decreased, the proportion clearly marks the preponderance of the Reformed Friars. Thus the Observants number, at the present day, about 15,000, and the Capuchins 7700, making a total of nearly 23,000 Reformed, whilst the Conventuals are evaluated only at 1345. In attesting this eventual triumph of the strict rule, is it not as well once more to emphasize the fact that its final victory was due to our saint's strenuous impulse?

CHAPTER VI

HIS LATTER YEARS (1442–4)

I. After being relieved, in the year 1442, of his office of Vicar of the Observance, Bernardine resumes his apostolic life. He delivers the Lenten course at Padua. Growing popular veneration.

II. He stays at Capriola, and there completes a revision of his sermons. His grief over the death of Brother Vincent.

III. His sermons at Massa and Siena. Aware of his approaching end, he nevertheless sets out to evangelize the kingdom of Naples. Incidents on the way. His last sermon at Città-ducale. He arrives at Aquila and dies there on 20 May, 1444.

IV. Prodigies and miracles take place after his death. A general demand made for his canonization. It takes place on 24 May of the year 1450. Honours paid to St. Bernardine.

I

DURING the four years in which he was Vicar of the Order, from the year 1438 to 1442, Bernardine, absorbed as he was by the executive work entailed by his office, had been obliged to relinquish all attempt at consecutive preaching. It was, in fact, all he could do to deliver an isolated sermon from time to time, as in the year 1439, when we find him preaching in Greek before the Fathers of the Council of Florence, assembled with the intent of putting an end to the schism of the East. Or again, in 1440, when on an occasion of exceptional importance, he consented to address the Florentines. For Florence, the papal ally, was

then threatened to be besieged by the formidable bands of Piccinino, a *condottiere* in the service of the Duke of Milan, and the scared, demoralized and disjointed inhabitants, "tossing," says an old chronicler, "like fish in a poisoned sea," seemed defenceless against such assailants. But, though usually the advocate of peace, Bernardine was by no means incapable of understanding the duty of legitimate self-defence. From the pulpit he besought the Florentines to implore God's aid and to aid themselves, opposed the existing factions, reanimated their pluck and failing courage, and thereby contributed not a little, with the help of a few valiant citizens of the stamp of Gino Capponi, to that brilliant and unexpected victory over the hostile army which took place on 29 June.

Bernardine meanwhile, who was suffering keenly from this state of comparative inactivity, in the year 1442 petitioned leave from the Pope to resign his functions as Vicar of the Observance, mainly on the plea of its affording him too little time for preaching.[1] And his request was no sooner granted than he resumed the toiling missionary life which had been his for twenty-one years, from 1417 to 1438, and which he was destined to continue until his death, neither age, nor fatigue, nor the painful infirmities with which he was afflicted[2] appearing to him to warrant inactivity.

[1] "*Causas exponens gravis senectutis, liberæ predicationis et mortis propinquæ.*"

[2] "*Arenulis diu vexatus est, podagrâ aliquandio: hemorrhoidarum fluxum gravem quatuordecim annis continuè passus est, sed ea æquanimitate, ut ab annuntiando verbo dei nunquam ob id tamen cessaverit.*" (Maphæus Vegius.)

He became increasingly convinced that preaching was his main, nay, his only, vocation. "I began," he says, about this time, to the inhabitants of Padua, "by singling out for myself the office of confessor, and I heard confessions of both men and women; then I was charged with the government of my brethren; later on I abandoned this charge and also that of confessor. Now I see that this even will not suffice, but that the time will come when no man will hold converse with me. . . . My conscience tells me to abandon private affairs and give myself to preaching in order to promote the general good."[1]

Once more Bernardine recommenced preaching in Milan, where he spent the autumn of the year 1442 in combating the heresy of a certain Amedeo, professor of mathematics. From thence he wended his way through the towns of Lombardy, petitions to him to preach reaching him from all sides. Thus, though he was solicited at one and the same time by the Duke of Milan and the Marquis of Ferrara to preach the Lenten course of the year 1443, he was obliged to refuse in view of the promise he had already made to give a mission at Padua.[2]

The account given of the sixty sermons delivered at Padua on this occasion, and continued in the edition of our saint's works published by Père de la Haye,[3] is said to have

[1] *Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III, p. 379.

[2] See the correspondence of Albert of Sarteano, then Vicar-General of the Minorites, on this subject, with both princes (*Alberti Sarth. Litteræ.*, litt. 75 and 76).

[3] *Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III, p. 168 to 394. Besides the Lenten

emanated from the pen of one of the audience, who, from other testimony, we gather to have been a lawyer of the town, Daniele di Porcilia by name. His Latin narrative, vastly inferior to that of the cloth-shearer of Siena, gives us a far less complete and vivid account; nay, it strikes the reader rather in the light of a somewhat dry epitome, unequal in merit and visibly curtailed[1] in certain portions, but withal a pretty exact reproduction of the substance of the discourse. The scribe has, besides, obviously done his best, while imploring help from above and modestly begging the reader to attribute to the writer, and not to the "man of God," any errors to be found in the work.[2]

Seraphin quadragesimale is the rather strange title of these Lenten sermons, wherein the preacher takes Love, its characteristic and effects, for his theme, treating it in the allegorical manner peculiar to the times, under the form of a seraph with two diadems and six wings; each stone of the former and each plume of the latter representing a particular attribute of Love and forming the subject of a sermon. In reality, however, though bracketed in this subtle and somewhat artificial manner, the matter was by no means new, consisting of divers subjects habitually

discourses, they contain also a certain number of sermons qualified as *extraordinarii*, for Bernardine, it seems, prolonged his stay at Padua after Lent on account of the Chapter assembled for the election of the Minister-General of the Order, and during that time delivered several extra sermons.

[1] See, for example, the peroration of Sermon XXXII, that of Sermon XXXIII, and the second part of Sermon XXXVI.

[2] *Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III, p. 394.

treated by our saint, and in no wise specially connected with Love: such as commerce, usury, feminine vanity, marriage, immorality, devotion to the name of Jesus, etc. In one university town we find him dwelling on the importance of intellectual study, and lamenting the fact that men of the higher classes no longer occupied themselves, as formerly, with science and the liberal arts, drawing a satirical picture of the idle youths to be seen dawdling on the market-place, scoffing at worthy people, and losing their time in gambling, riding, or hunting. Urging them to prosecute some serious branch of study, and not to confound themselves with "the idiots who consider themselves aristocrats merely because they do nothing, and neglect to prosecute their studies because they possess houses and dominions," he points out the advantages to be reaped by a country from scholarship and learning. "You are called upon to govern your family, to aid the republic by your counsel. A life ennobled by science and virtue is an enjoyable life, a life useful to every one."[1] These remarks of his were so well received and so much relished by the inhabitants of Padua, that we find the preacher himself expressing his contentment and congratulating himself upon it as follows: "Never in any town have I touched on so delicate a subject, nor pronounced as many home truths as in yours; nay, I should not have ventured to do so elsewhere. But I spoke in this wise, since I here beheld among my audience not only men

[1] *Sancti Bern. Op.*, Vol. III, p. 340.

of an upright life, but eloquent and noble representatives of every faculty of learning, while elsewhere I might not have been so readily understood: I might merely have been jeered at and accused either of teaching heresy or of wishing to pass as a man of learning, whereas I know nothing. I believe it is your patron St. Anthony who besought God to lead me to you. And whatever I have said is not from myself, but from God; wherefore, if any one contradict my words, hearken not unto him, for he will certainly be doing the work of the evil one."[1]

When the day came for Bernardine to speak for the last time the crowd was more numerous and animated than ever. The preacher resumed what he was saying on Love, and thereupon bade farewell to his audience.

"I give thanks first of all to God," he said, "and to our Seraphic Father for all the graces he has obtained for us, for the favourable weather we have enjoyed without rain, save on the day when we spoke of lust, when it rained, doubtless, to render the weather conformable to the subject. I give thanks to God also for the good done to souls, for nowhere do I remember having reaped such abundant fruit. And, lastly, I give thanks to you for your patience; you were never weary, but, on the contrary, came day after day, growing in number, fervour and zeal, hearkening eagerly to the Divine Word. How much praise and thanksgiving is then due to the majesty of Him from Whom flow all good and all perfection, and Who

[1] *Sancti Bern. Op.*, Vol. III, p. 340.

has granted me grace to speak and you grace to listen! . . . Infinite thanks let us likewise render for these benefits to the glorious Virgin Mary, the object of my devotion, and to St. Anthony, whose zeal for her glory is well known. I must further express my thanks to the heads and governors of your august city, to those eminent and worthy citizens and students who were good enough to hearken attentively to my words, to whom I shall be for ever grateful, in Christ Jesus, as well as to all other good people, and to the women who have prayed for me. And now I wish to act like a good father about to leave his children and to make my will in your favour. First I bequeath to you the most precious thing that I have to leave you, the most devout name of Jesus, that name that is above all other names. . . ."

After recommending some pious practices, the preacher terminates thus :—

"I bequeath to you also the charity that I have preached to you, to be exercised towards God, your neighbour and yourselves, and I ask you furthermore to remember me in your prayers. Lastly, I beg that we be linked together, you to me and I to you, by the bond of perfect charity, in Christ Jesus, so that we may meet again in that paradise where may God in His mercy deign to lead us, Who liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen."[1]

The Paduans could not bear the thought of losing our saint so soon, and besought him with tears to delay his

[1] *St. Bern. Op.*, Vol. III, p. 393.

departure for at least a few days. But Bernardine refused, for he felt himself drawn to evangelize other parts; he had indeed resolved, after being enlightened in prayer, to proceed to Vicenza. To escape any public demonstration, however, he left the people in their belief that he was going to Venice, and whilst the crowd awaited him on the road to this town, he took the route to Vicenza. Yet even so he was unable to escape the notice of over five hundred persons, who immediately left their occupations to escort him. But at some distance from the town he begged them not to come any further and gave them his paternal blessing. "All," relates Daniele di Porcilia, "then ran forward to kiss his hand: I beheld him at this moment so hemmed in that he could scarcely move, for the departure of our spiritual father was a heartbreak to us, and all were in tears; nay, I saw how a celebrated doctor of civil and canon law, Prosdocimo Conti, could scarcely bring himself to release the hand he had seized, and could not refrain from tears, while many others, learned students and citizens of distinction, acted in like manner. Very few turned back; many preceded him to the bridge of Brentella, whilst others followed in his train, loath to lose sight of him. Two of the friars who accompanied him, seeing that the saint was grieved at these manifestations, hastened to the bridge-master to beg him to raise it as soon as Bernardine had passed over, so that by this means a few only were able to cross the river with him, while the rest returned sadly to Padua. At Relesega, where he arrived with these few

followers who had managed to follow him, Bernardine took a little rest, but the peasants were no sooner warned of his presence than they flocked in crowds, bringing him bread, wine and meat."[1]

He was greeted with signal honours at Vicenza, where he succeeded in appeasing discord. Whereupon, as if inspired by the wish to gaze his last on all the places endeared to him by his first missionary tour, he visited Verona, Venice, Ferrara, Bologna and Florence. Although at this same time a bull was issued by Eugene IV, dated from Siena, 26 May, 1443, charging Bernardine to preach the indulgences for the crusade against the Turks,[2] there is no sign of his having done so. Everywhere the population received him with veneration and growing devotion; everywhere he came to be recognized more and more, not only as a famous preacher, but as a saint.

II

At the close of the year 1443 and the beginning of the following year, Bernardine appears to have spent some months at Capriola for the purpose of completing and revising the Latin edition of his sermons. It was probably on this occasion that he wrote those on the Beatitudes, which figure in the Advent series, *De Christiana vita*,[3] since he dwells therein on the death of Friar Vincent, his faith-

[1] *St. Bern. Op.*, Vol. III, p. 393.
[2] *Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria*, Anno II, Fasc. I–II., p. 130 *seq.*
[3] *Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III.

ful companion on his missionary journeys, whose death we know had occurred a short time previously. For over twenty-two years Vincent had not left Bernardine's side—ministering to all his wants, sharing in all his labours, as well as in his innermost thoughts, and receiving confidences from him of certain signal graces with which God had favoured him, coupled with the injunction to tell no man, so that on his death-bed the friar sadly owned to some of the brethren that "he feared not death, but bewailed to bury with him the virtues of Bernardine, and the divine favours received by him in such abundance, since had he but survived that saintly man for an hour's space, freed from the oath of secrecy by which he was then bound, he could have published facts which would have filled the whole world with wonder and admiration."[1]

The loss of such a friend broke Bernardine's tender heart. When in his sermons on the Beatitudes he came to "*Beati qui lugent*," he broke away from the logical development of his theme to give vent to the grief he could not suppress, and in the midst of this theological essay we come across a long chapter entitled, "*Pia deploratio pro morte fratris Vincentii, fidelissimi ac dilectissimi socii mei.*"[2]

Three centuries previously St. Bernard in like manner breaks off his sermon on the Canticle of Canticles, to bewail the death of young Brother Gerard,[3] and the same

[1] Wadding's *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XI, p. 169.

[2] "Pious lamentations on the death of Brother Vincent, my faithful and very dear companion." (*Sancti Bernardini Opera*, Vol. III, p. 37 *seq.*)

[3] *Sancti Bernardini Opera, Cant. Cant.*, Sermon XXVI.

inspiration, the same accents prevail in both lamentations. The reader will pardon a somewhat lengthy quotation from that of St. Bernardine :—

"Whenever I meditate on what the Scripture says of fraternal sympathy and tenderness, I feel the sword of sorrow pierce my soul to the quick, and it is in vain that I try to restrain my tears. . . . He, thanks to whom I could in all places give myself to the Lord, has been taken from me, and my heart is broken because of it. I do my best to master my grief, but I acknowledge my failure to do so. For I must give vent to the sorrow which gnaws at my heart. I must speak of my grief in order that compassionate hearts may afford me some little comfort.

"You know, my very dear brethren, how justified is my lament, how piteous my wound. You know how faithful was the companion who has forsaken me on my pilgrimage, how vigilant was his care, how great his love of work and sweetness of character. He was, moreover, greatly attached to me and loved me with all his soul. In religion he was a beloved brother to me, and in the greatness of his love he was as another self. Pity me, I beseech you, and bemoan my fate. Weak in body, I was often ill, when he would support me and lead me by the hand. When I grew faint-hearted he never failed to encourage me, when indolent and careless over the things of God he would spur me onwards, when heedless or forgetful he was there to reprove me. Why hast thou been taken from me, Vincent? Why hast thou been torn from me, thou who wast ever one with me,

thou who wast after my own heart? Is there any one who would have been unmoved at the sight of so sweet a link in a mutual love? Is there another save death, the enemy of all happiness, that would not have spared us?

"Why, I wonder, did we love each other, and why, in that case, were we separated? A hard plight, not for thee, but for me. For, my brother, if thou hast quitted dear friends, thou hast, I verily believe, found those dearer still. Instead of poor and puny me, thou now rejoicest in the sight of God and joinest in the choir of angels without grief for my absence. But I, what do I find in thy stead? How happy were I to know whether thou still rememberest me, thy faithful friend, tottering under the weight of trials and bereft of thy support, the staff of my weakness! I long to know whether, in the midst of an abyss of light and plunged in eternal felicity, it is still given thee to think of the miseries of this world. Thy love, I know, has not diminished. It has only changed, since the sight of God cannot have made thee forgetful of us. For does not God Himself take care of us? Thou hast rejected that which is infected with weakness, but charity has never yet destroyed that which is holy. Ah! do not ever forget me, do not separate thyself from me. Thou knowest where I crawl, in what place I lie, and where thou hast left me. There is now no one to help me. In the path of life I turn mine eyes, as I was wont, towards my brother Vincent, and he is there no more. In my misery I groan like a man destitute of help. Who shall I

question in my perplexity? To whom in adversity shall I give my confidence? Who will assist me to carry my burden? Who will remove danger from my path? For was not Vincent ever wont to precede my steps? You who knew him know how true are my words. Was not thy heart, Vincent, better acquainted with my wants than I myself? Did it not feel my griefs and pains more acutely? In thy loving and bashful manner didst thou not often correct the asperity of my sermons, tempering with thy friendship the fire thereof? The Lord had, moreover, endowed him with such a fluency and pregnancy of language that he was able to preach without any preparation. He astonished all by the wisdom of his advice and counsels, as regards both domestic and other affairs. He hastened to meet visitors to prevent their intruding on my repose, permitting only those whom he could not pacify to have access to me, and sending others on their way. He was nowise engrossed in his own affairs, but entered into the least of my cares and made all my concerns his own, in order to give me more leisure, since, in his modesty, he deemed my leisure to be more fruitful than his; and yet the more he devoted himself to others the less gratitude did he receive, so that he who thus spent himself in his neighbour's service was not infrequently in want of the necessaries of life, of food, of clothing and a proper resting-place. I thank thee from the bottom of my heart, sweet friend, for the fruits of my preaching and labour during the course of my journeys in Italy, since, if I have

been useful in anything, if my teaching has been salutary, it is to thee that I owe it. For whilst thou attended to domestic affairs, I was either resting, thanks to thee, or else delivering my sermons. How could I have been otherwise than secure when my interests lay in thy keeping, thou, my right hand, the apple of my eye, thou, my very heart and tongue? How many faults might I not have committed in the course of my preaching if his upright intelligence, his enlightened mind and his great discernment had not directed me with so much zeal and solicitude! . . . In my Order, I confess, I found no other master to teach me how to preach the word of God. . . . If there is any good in me, I owe it to thee. . . .

"May the tears flow and fall in torrents from my wretched brow, so that they may, perchance, suffice to wipe out the stain of my crimes, of those crimes which have incurred the Divine wrath against me. . . . Many of those who were at the funeral of my beloved brother were astonished to see the tears gush from my eyes, tears coming straight from the heart. In vain I forced myself to conceal my grief. In the attempt, the fire which was consuming my heart only shot up into brighter flames which ravished my soul. And it crept with so much suppleness and nipped with so much cruelty that it succeeded at last in wringing tears from my eyes. In my lamentations, I deplore nothing of what the world regrets. I grieve for a salutary adviser, a faithful helper in the things of God. I grieve for Vincent — Vincent my faithful companion

during the twenty-two years and more in which I have preached the gospel. . . . What a wretched being am I! Parted from my better half, I wallow in the mire, and am asked if I weep! My heart is broken, and I am asked whether I feel any grief! I weep and am grieved because my strength is not that of a rock and because my flesh is not of brass! I suffer and pity myself, 'and my sorrow is ever before me.' I cannot boast Jeremiah's insensibility when he said: 'Thou hast smitten them and they have not uttered one complaint.'"

Lengthy as this extract already appears, it has yet been considerably curtailed. It would seem, indeed, as though Bernardine, unable to restrain his tears and lamentations, had abandoned himself wholly to his sorrow, regardless of repetition; hence, nothing more sincere, more earnest and less rhetorical can be conceived. It is touching thus to behold him in desolation, tasting the bitter fruits of that human tenderness which, despite his heroic sanctity, had remained by him till old age. For while the saint is not thereby diminished in our estimation, the man gains infinitely in charm and pathos.

III

Prompted by his increasing infirmities, and perchance inspired by interior revelation, Bernardine grew convinced that he had not long to live, which probably accounts for his desire to preach the Lent of the year 1444 at Massa, the little town in which he was born. There, despite

his physical weakness, he preached on fifty consecutive days, eloquently and convincingly proclaiming the peace he had at heart. No doubt the startling cure of a leper, healed suddenly of his wounds by wearing the sandals of the saint, was of material assistance in lending weight to his words. Then from Massa, stimulated by patriotic fervour, he returned to Siena and delivered his last sermon on the square in front of the Duomo between the cathedral porch and the hospital of la Scala, dwelling with singular ardour—"*ferventer*," says his biographer—on the justice and righteousness of the republic.

The consciousness of his approaching end was no plea for Bernardine to seek quiet and repose; on the contrary, as his body grew older his soul waxed younger, more stalwart and more ardent to spend itself for the good of others.[1] Nay, believing himself called upon to extend his mission into hitherto unvisited districts, he resolved to go and evangelize the kingdom of Naples, desirous as he was that there should be no part of Italy which had not heard his voice.[2] In vain his relations and friends, appalled by a project so little in keeping with his physical strength, besought him to give up the idea and spend the closing years of his life in his own country. "I

[1] "*Magno caritatis incendio, sensit in senili corpore animum excitari juvenilem ingensque desiderium proximis benefaciendi.*"

[2] He had only once crossed the Neapolitan frontier, in the year 1438, when, summoned to Aquila by the affairs of the Observance, he delivered a sermon on the Blessed Virgin before the King of Naples. It was on this occasion that, according to his biographers, a star appeared shining over his head.

am aware that I am old and little suited to bear fatigue," he replied, "but the charity which impels me bids me, so long as I have the use of my tongue, not to desist from preaching the word of God, from exhorting the people, and likewise from journeying, with this end in view, to distant lands." As his beloved brethren of Capriola held him tearfully in their arms to retain him, he consoled them with loving words, but at the same time bade them desist from their grief for fear of opposing the Divine Will. "Pray, rather," said he to them, "that the Lord of the harvest Who sends me, though all unworthy to work on His land, may deign to direct my steps for the glory of His name in the right way, and give to my voice the force of virtue in order that I may worthily announce His wonders to the people." Does not this episode recall Vincent Ferrer to mind, who, though old and infirm, felt himself likewise impelled to carry the name of God to more distant lands and to set out for Brittany where he died?

On the night of 30 April, A.D. 1444, Bernardine quitted Siena by stealth, so as to escape the popular demonstrations which were prepared to signalize his departure. He rode an ass, for he was too weak to walk, and was accompanied by four friars. After spending the first evening in the Conventual Convent of Asciano, whose guardian he won over to the Observance, Bernardine proceeded to the convent on the Isle of Lake Trasimene, a place sanctified by the sojourn of St. Francis of Assisi,

where our saint met one of his most illustrious disciples, James of the Marches, with whom he passed three days in pious conference, and to whom he gave his last instructions.[1] Whereupon, after preaching on the Sunday to the population of the neighbourhood, he set out for Perugia.

This city, being one of those in which his preaching had been signalized by an abundant harvest, was most eager for his return, pending which a marble pulpit had been erected in front of the cathedral, which Bernardine was to inaugurate into use. He mounted its steps smiling, says the old biographer, at the sight of the crowd so eager to prove their love for him: "*Ascendit et risit pariter bonus pater, tantam videns diligentissimorum hominum erga se affectionem.*" But he did not utter a single word, either, as is suggested by one of his biographers, because he feared that such a vast concourse of people might cause an accident, or because he felt too weak to make himself heard by so large an audience; anyhow, he immediately descended from the pulpit, merely saying in his habitual jocular tone: "The day which He gave me He has likewise taken away."

From Perugia he went to Assisi and stayed some days in the convent of the Observance, at St. Mary of the Angels, admonishing the monks, whose fervour proved a source

[1] According to some historians, John of Capistrano likewise took part in this conference, although the evidence for this assertion appears to us inconclusive.

of edification to him. Whereupon he pursued his way to Foligno and Spoleto, where he preached and wrought some miraculous cures. And everywhere the people, the magistrates, and the clergy greeted, with touching veneration, this poor, humble old monk, so miserable of aspect, so physically decrepit, whose sanctity grew daily more visible and apparent.

He quitted Spoleto on May 11th. He could scarcely leave the town for the crowd that thronged around him; moreover the dysentery, from which he suffered, increased by fatigue, rendered the journey more and more arduous to him; but he would not stop, and the next day had still strength enough to preach in the hamlet of Pedelugo, arriving by night at Rieti in the Sabine country, where people and magistrates came forth to meet him by torch-light and conducted him to the convent of St. Francis, where a banquet had been got ready for him. But, though surrounded by delicacies, he would accept nothing but a little bread soaked in cold water, talking so gaily the while that his enchanted hosts afterwards declared that they never partook of a more agreeable repast, even at a princely table. The following day, so as not to disappoint a people who had evinced so much love for him, and who had already formerly hearkened to his word, he consented to preach. Though his ebbing strength would not permit him to develop a deep discourse, yet he still found strength to dwell in simple terms on the sins by which many were led astray. "Eighteen years ago," said

he in conclusion, "when I left you, I called you my children, and after so many years I find not only the children I left, but those children's children. To-day, then, I adopt you all as my children without distinction; you shall all bear this name, and I shall always preserve my love for you." Then followed the cure of a little girl, suddenly healed of her wounds, which added to the popular enthusiasm.

From Rieti Bernardine reached the little town of Cittàducale on the frontier of the kingdom of Naples, where he was received with similar marks of veneration, and where, despite his weakness, he acceded to a request to preach in the market-place. His eloquence had never assumed more touching or more penetrating accents than during this sermon, at the conclusion of which he alluded to himself, beseeching the people by their prayers to obtain for him the grace of a holy death and that of the pardon of his sins. And Bernardine knew well as he descended the pulpit that he would never mount it again, that he had concluded the work to which he had devoted his life. He could at least comfort himself with the thought that he had laboured to the very last at doing all the good in his power. The results obtained were indeed considerable, and the more remarkable because the work of a single man who, though he might have disciples, had never had a master. Not that our saint could boast of having radically transformed the masses to whom he had addressed himself. For was not the close of the century to witness

the reign of the Borgias in Italy? But it is not in accordance with the destinies of the Church militant that its members should be converted, even by great saints, in such a manner as to be proof against all relapse. And thus it was much to succeed in producing even a temporary improvement in staving off the evil day for a few more years, and in saving a certain number of souls—a task which Bernardine, single-handed, had undoubtedly accomplished in the midst of adverse times. Wherefore, at the close of his arduous and beneficent apostolate he may well be said to have earned the praise bestowed on him by a contemporary: "*Non satis possum mirari et magnifacere unum hominem tot populis salute fuisse.*"[1]

The sermon of Città-ducale had sapped Bernardine's remaining strength. That same evening the dysentery redoubled, and was attended by fever and faintness. However, the next day he continued his journey notwithstanding, until he reached the market town of Antrodoco, laughing merrily at himself the while for riding on an ass. On the following day he had still greater difficulty in pursuing his journey, his extreme sufferings obliging him several times to stop and lie down on the ground. His companions, struck by the contrast afforded by the spectacle of the enthusiastic multitudes that thronged the way to render homage to their spiritual father, and by the illness wasting away that feeble frame, called to mind how shortly

[1] "I cannot sufficiently honour and glorify one man for having been the salvation of so many people." (Maphæus Vegius.)

the procession of palms had proceeded the Passion. Meanwhile Bernardine had been obliged to halt at the village of San Silvestro, seven miles from Aquila, where he passed a restless night. The next day he was too feeble to move, so that his companions persuaded him to be carried; thus, "sad and groaning," says the old chronicle, he was borne as far as Aquila. This was on the Sunday before Ascension Day.

Thus, in a dying state, did Bernardine reach the kingdom of Naples, whither his zeal had impelled him, and was carried by his brethren to the large "Conventual Monastery," where he could be better cared for than in the more outlying and destitute convents of the Observance, and where he was placed in the cell which John of Capistrano occupied when he came to Aquila on affairs of the Order. It was the custom, moreover, for the larger and more prosperous Conventual houses to thus offer hospitality to their brethren of the Observance.

No sooner had the saint arrived than the magistrates sent the ablest doctors of the town to his aid, and rich and poor alike anxiously awaited the news. But remedies were powerless over a frame which, according to a contemporary, "was melting like wax near a fire," and on the Wednesday the invalid asked for the last Sacraments. Shortly after, feeling that his hour had come, being unable to speak, he signified, by gesture, to the brethren that he wished to be laid on the floor of his cell.[1]

[1] According to another account of an eye-witness, Bernardine, despite the

Thus with arms crossed and eyes raised to heaven, with a countenance as joyous, says his biographer, as though he had just gained a victory over the enemy, and like to one smiling, *ridenti similis*, he rendered up his soul to God. His death occurred on 20 May, 1444, on the eve of the Ascension, at Vesper time, and just as the friars were chanting, in choir, the anthem of the Magnificat: "*Pater, manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus quos dedisti mihi: nunc autem pro eis rogo, non pro mundo, quia ad te venio. Alleluia.*"[1] Bernardine was sixty-four years old, having passed forty-two years of his life in religion, and having devoted at least twenty years to preaching.

IV

No sooner was the news of his death noised abroad than the people flocked in crowds to the convent, forcing the doors in order to venerate the saint's remains. Bernardine's companions wished to remove the body to Capriola, and had already begun the necessary preparations. But the town of Aquila refused to part with the precious relic, and at once took measures to secure it. By order of the municipality, the obsequies were celebrated with a degree of pomp, says an eye-witness, never before accorded to a

friars' repeated efforts to prevent his doing so, had himself slipped his legs out of bed on to the floor of his cell. (See an epistle of Fra Giuliano, then a Minorite at Aquila, taken from a MS. in the Florentine Library, by M. Donati, *Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria.* Anno I, Fasc. I–II, 1894.)

[1] "Father, Thy name I have manifested to the men Thou hast given me: and I now pray for them and not for the world, for I go to Thee. Alleluia."

king or queen.[1] And that which still further impressed the populace were the miracles which took place in quick succession at the coffin.[2]

For twenty days this stood at the entrance of the Franciscan church. The inhabitants of the town and the neighbouring places flocked in such numbers to venerate it, that they formed a continuous file, amongst whom were many invalids and infirm persons, of whom several were cured. The population, witnessing these wonders, fell into an extraordinary state of exaltation, so that the bells were constantly pealing and workmen and peasants stopped their work. At one time the renewal of strife between the nobility and people threatened to bring a warlike note into this general sound of rejoicing. Nay, the combatants were already arming when, at the cry of a small child, all turned towards the coffin and discovered it to be reddened with blood, which issued from the nostrils of the dead. Awed and appeased by what seemed a protestation against their enmity from beyond the tomb, they sought speedy reconciliation. Thus, even in death, did Bernardine continue to advocate that concord which he had done so much to establish during life.

Meanwhile news of these marvels had spread throughout Italy, since the monks who had witnessed the death and the

[1] See the afore-mentioned letter of Fra Giuliano, *Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria*, Anno I, Fasc. I–II, p. 70.

[2] The contemporary biographies contain a detailed enumeration of these miracles.

ensuing miracles had sent their brethren a detailed account of the same, which had immediately been circulated,[1] causing an immense sensation. In the places where Bernardine had preached the tide of feeling ran exceptionally high. Everywhere solemn services were held, at which the municipality, the clergy and the entire population assisted; nay, in Siena the crowd was so great that they were obliged to officiate on the *Piazza del Campo*. And such was the grief and devotion of his compatriots that we find them voiced by the Sienese poet, Giovanni de Ser Francesco, in a species of lament;[2] such was the repute in which Bernardine's memory was held in Milan that the Duke Philip Maria Visconti, though far from devout, petitioned for the saint's spectacles in the hope of being cured of the eye-complaint from which he was suffering.

Nor did they content themselves with these demonstrations, for on all sides the cry arose for his speedy canonization. Whereupon John of Capistrano hastened from the

[1] Such is the drift of Fra Giuliano's afore-mentioned epistle (*Bull. Sen. de Storia Patria*). The writer, himself probably a Milanese, forwarded his account to the convent of that town. Written on the spur of the moment and disconnected in style, it betrays the feelings of the day. Giuliano enumerates several miracles, describing each in turn, and rejoices with passionate eagerness both at the consolation accruing therefrom to the saint's friends, and at the confusion befalling his enemies. After exhorting his correspondent not to keep hidden the facts which he relates, he adds, "*Fatene a sapere per tutto Milano se none vi faro schuminicare da Frate Lodovicho e dalli compagni. E anche sarà buono a trovare quello porco Bufaccio cholla setta, e lavargli il capo sanza sapone, e così a tutti quanti n'àno detto male: se none fate questo, dirò male di voi.*"

[2] *Bull. Senese di Storia Patria*, Anno I, Fasc. I–II, p. 66–7.

kingdom of Naples to take up the cause, being as eager for the glorification of his dead master as he had been to defend him, when alive, against his enemies. And at Aquila he met James of the Marches, bent on the same errand. The latter, we are told, was preaching on the Piazza di Todi at the very hour of Bernardine's death, and had stopped in the middle of his discourse, remaining several minutes motionless, and thereupon exclaiming: "Dear brethren, let us weep, for at this instant a great pillar of the Church has fallen and the brightest star in Italy is extinct."

The Sienese, who naturally took a prominent part in the process of their compatriot's canonization, sent to Aquila to gather confirmation of the alleged miracles on the spot.[1] And the inhabitants of Aquila, on their part, undertook a similar inquiry, so that by the month of July the republic of Siena was already enabled to send a legate to Rome to present a solemn petition for the canonization to Pope Eugene IV. The King of Naples, Alphonsus of Aragon, wrote in a similar strain to the Pope, who showed himself most favourably disposed, "reckoning himself very fortunate in that such a man should have been sent by God during his lifetime, and should have died in time to be canonized by him."

[1] The municipal library and city archives contain many documents relating to the proceedings of the republic of Siena with regard to Bernardine's canonization. Many of these are mentioned in that already quoted work of M. Donati's *Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria*, Anno I, Fasc. I-II, and in the notes to Pastor's *History of the Popes*, edited by the Rev. Frederick Antrobus (Kegan Paul). See also *Spoglio delle deliberazioni del consiglio della Campana, passim.*

Still, it not being the custom of the Holy See to act in such matters with anything like precipitation, committees were formed and entrusted with the task of sifting and inquiring into the alleged miracles. A delay, moreover, was entailed by a change of appointment by death, and by the indolence of the commissioners, a fact of which the former adversaries of Bernardine were not slow to take advantage, by attempting once again to throw doubt on his orthodoxy. But this time the Pope constituted himself our saint's advocate and thus reduced his enemies to silence. Nevertheless, the process was indefinitely prolonged until after the death of Eugene IV, which occurred in the year 1447. At first his successor, Nicholas V, was intimidated by rumours of more or less hidden opposition to the course he had in view, while, on the other hand, petitions flowed in from all sides testifying to the eagerness with which Italy awaited the news of the canonization; nay, Siena commissioned her envoys to complain bitterly of the delay. And John of Capistrano, in order to dissipate all doubts from the Pope's mind, volunteered, with characteristic impetuosity, to subject himself to an ordeal by fire, begging that a stake might be kindled and Bernardine's body placed thereon. He then proposed to cast himself into the flames, when, if spared by them, the sanctity of the dead would be held to be divinely attested. He only asked that, in the event of his perishing, his death might be imputed to his own

sins and leave intact the renown of his master. Nicholas V, while refusing to permit the ordeal, was yet induced by this proof of fraternal love to urge forward the inquiry more imperatively than he had hitherto done.

It was on 26 February, A.D. 1450, less than six years after Bernardine's death, that the Sovereign Pontiff, judging the case clear, announced to the Sienese envoys that the canonization would take place at Pentecost. Circumstances happily conspired to render this glorification of the humble Minorite an event of more than usual prominence. For the cause he had served in its militant days seemed for the moment to have triumphed, as peace reigned, comparatively speaking, in Italy, while the vast concourse of pilgrims attracted to Rome by the jubilee year recalled the fervour of a more devout age. The unity of the Church had once more been consolidated by the defeat of the Synod of Bâle, and for a moment it seemed as though the Council of Florence had put an end to the Greek Schism. Moreover, the great literary renown of Nicholas V and his enlightened taste for the fine arts had so far contributed to the increase of papal prestige that rarely had the Church presided so indisputably over the march of progress. Coming as it did after the recent humiliations of the Great Schism and before the approaching scandal of Alexander Borgia's reign, it was a unique moment in the annals of Catholicism.

On the day fixed for the canonization, 24 May, 1450,

a long procession, comprising close upon four thousand Minorites of the Observance, might be seen wending its way from the convent of the Araceli towards St. Peter's.[1] The function took place amid great pomp in the papal Basilica, the Pope in person pronouncing the eulogy of the new saint.

The news of Bernardine's canonization was the signal for the celebration of joyous festivities all over Italy. At Siena these lasted two days, the bishop singing High Mass on the spot where the saint had preached. "All the town was merry," said an old chronicler, "and every one gave to eat and to drink to those who needed it."[2] Churches and convents dedicated to St. Bernardine speedily sprang up in all directions. Painters and sculptors, medal-makers and silversmiths vied with one another in reproducing his likeness; writers extolled his virtues and his eloquence. In the second half of the fifteenth century, indeed, no saint was more popular and more honoured in Italy than he; nay, veneration for him crossed with his disciples over the Alps.

To help renew the fame impaired by time, and to restore to the figure something of its pristine colour and charm has been the writer's modest endeavour in the course of these pages, nor can he believe himself wrong

[1] Among the number were three future saints—John of Capistrano, James of the Marches, and Diego d' Alcala.

[2] A detailed account of these festivities is found in Dati's *Storia Senese* and in the *Diario Senese* of Allegretti.

in holding the endearing and generous qualities of this poor friar, his peerless virtue, his love of souls, and his thirst for peace and justice to be of a nature to win for him in our day a reflex, at least, of the love and admiration he inspired in the fifteenth century.

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AUTHOR

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Thureau-Dangin, Paul Marie, Pierre

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